The Crown of Heaven

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THE

CROWN OF HEAVEN,

THE SUPREME

OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN HOPE.

FROM THE GERMAN

OF

REV. JOHN N. STÖGER, S. J.

BY

REV. M. NASH, S. J.

Permissu Superiorum.

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

WHOEVER is banished from his native country, or separated from his beloved family, and compelled to lead a solitary life far away in a distant land, amid scenes both strange and sad, receives with unbounded joy the least little news from friends and home. "As cold water is to a thirsty soul, so are good tidings from a far country,"* says the Holy Scripture. And, though the news be scanty, and the language in which it is related be defective, it will still be to him most acceptable. He will easily overlook such deficiencies; for a loving heart finds interest in every item, be it ever so trifling, that relates to a dear parent, to a beloved family, or to his native home.

Now since we are all citizens of Heaven, and strangers here on earth, a communication about the high, noble, final, and happy end of Christian hope, no matter how imperfect the ideas and language may be, must ever be precious and welcome to our hearts and minds.

The object which we propose to ourselves, in offering to the public this little book, is limited to this: To recall to our minds a few thoughts about the greatness and importance of the reward which faith promises us, and which is the crown of our redemption. The few historical traits, which we add, may render the reading a little

* Prov. xxv., 35.

more interesting, and serve as means to recall the truths which we have succinctly placed before our readers.

The Theological proofs of this important point of our Faith, to be found in the works of the great St. Thomas and of other Doctors, are not adapted to popular reading. Though nearly every preacher has one or more sermons on Heaven, yet those discourses explain only one point of the subject. Besides St. Bonaventure, who has left us unfortunately but a short treatise on Heaven, there are only three, at least as far as my knowledge extends, who have expressly and in detail, treated on this subject—Father Jeremiah Drexellius, S. J., Cardinal Bellarmin, S. J., and Father Rapin,* Whoever has time to read these Treatises, will most assuredly derive great profit from them; and will be edified by the simplicity, learning, and unction of these distinguished and holy men. But since these writings are, at least in our day, beyond the reach of most people, for Bellarmin's "Felicity of the Saints" was translated only a few years ago, I thought it not amiss, for the convenience of many who would like to think of Heaven, briefly to speak in this little work, insignificant though it be, if not of all, at least of the principal points of this subject.

May these reflections on the Crown of Heaven, with God's blessing, help all who are called thereunto, to reach the possession of eternal beatitude.

Paris, Festival of St. Pulcheria, 1849.

* In America, F. Boudreau, S. J, and Father Weninger, have written on this subject The works of Drexellius and Rapin have never, I think, been translated into English.—Translator.

INTRODUCTION.

"I BRING you good tidings of great joy."* Friends, Brothers, men of every age and race, of every people, of every language, of every land, rejoice and be glad; you shall be happy, very happy, completely happy, infinitely happy, eternally happy. Such is the announcement of Faith and of our holy religion; and such is the invitation which our Mother, the Catholic Church, the true Spouse of Jesus Christ, repeats without intermission from the rising to the setting sun.

May the silent lines of this little Book cause this joyful invitation—*to be eternally happy*—to ring in the hearts of its readers.

Notwithstanding the grandeur of the doctrine, the sanctity of the principles, and the wonders of the mysteries of our holy Religion, they would be all empty sounds, vain words, without their foundation and their completion—the eternal reward which has been promised to us. The hope of an eternal beatitude is the fruit of our redemption, and the price of the adorable Blood of Jesus Christ, whereby he effected a reconciliation between Heaven and Earth, freed us from the power of death, raised us to the dignity of children of God, and placed before us the inheritance of Eternal Beatitude.

* Luke ii., 10.

No! we do not find here on earth, in this valley of tears, true, full and lasting happiness of soul and body; for this, we must look beyond the grave; we must raise our eyes to Heaven. In the city of God, in Paradise, in the kingdom of Heaven alone, can we expect to find "joy without sorrow, youth without old age, satiety without surfeit, freedom without restriction, beauty without stain, peace without disturbance, security without fear, happiness without end."*

Although the kingdom of Heaven is the object of all promises, the hope of our Faith, yet we must confess that there is nothing of which men know so little, think of so seldom, or which they forget so readily as the glory of Heaven.

I venture to hope that this little Book will lead reflecting minds to think on this subject, and will help the Christian to remember the dignity of his vocation, by giving him a clearer view of the grandeur of that hope to which God has called us, and of the treasures which he has prepared for His Saints.† He who never allows his thoughts to rest on celestial objects, is deprived of the most effective means of gaining Heaven. He who never thinks of Heaven, deprives himself, even in this life, of the purest, noblest pleasures, the most indispensable consolation. He, on the contrary, who frequently meditates on Heaven and its joys; who, with the light of Faith beholds its beauty and its felicity, will soon

* St. Bonaventure. † Eph. i., 18.

come to the conclusion, that he must obtain it, at any price; he will feel strength and courage in the storm, and bear off the victory in the combat of this life; in sufferings, he will have a foretaste of eternal delights; he will walk in the path of virtue and be happy. It is therefore of the utmost importance—as far as human frailty permits—to learn to know Heaven more perfectly, by meditating on it more carefully. An exhausted traveler thinks continually of the end of his journey; the mariner ever keeps before his mind the harbor to which he is steering; the slave never loses sight of the hour, when he is to be released from bondage. Should not then the Christian willingly and frequently think of Heaven? Since the subject relates to the happiness of all men without exception, there should be no truth of our Faith about which we ought to be so willing to speak or to hear, which should have such strong attractions for all, as the thought of an everlasting, a happy and a heavenly life.

But is it not presumption to treat so grand a subject within the narrow limits of a small Book? Is it not presumption to attempt to depict Paradise and its beatitude? Dare we venture to intone the hymns of Holy Sion, whilst we are here on earth, like Jehovah's Captive People on the shores of Babylon's tearful streams? How can one born blind describe the beauties of light and color? How render spiritual, eternal, heavenly things, intelligible, by expressions of poor, limited, human

thoughts and language? A Prophet accustomed to behold in spirit, the mysteries of the future, could say nothing else of the wonders which God has prepared for his elect, than: "From the beginning of the world they have not heard, nor perceived with the ears; the eye hath not seen, O God, besides thee, what things thou hast prepared for them that wait for thee."* Though admitted to the third Heaven, St. Paul could find no words to express the happiness in store for the just—he could only say: "That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him."† "So great, so elevated is the happiness of Heaven, that it surpasses all human comprehension, the highest soar of our imagination."‡

At the request of his friend, Severus, St. Augustine was about to write a little treatise on celestial happiness. He had already retired to his cell, and taken up his pen to write to St. Jerome, according to his custom, for the purpose of obtaining his views on certain points. But suddenly—he himself relates it—a light, such as had never been seen before, such as no language could describe, and an unspeakably delightful fragrance filled his little cell. While wondering at this strange phenomenon, Augustine heard a clear, distinct voice say to him: "What are you doing, Augustine? Do you mean to say that one can put the entire ocean into a small vase,

* Is lxiv., 4. † I Cor. ii., 9. ‡ St. Bonaventure.

or throw his arms around the earth? Do you want to see what no eye has seen, to understand what the heart of man has never conceived? Do you want to comprehend what is infinite and incomprehensible? With what measure will you measure what is immeasurable?" —It was the voice of St. Jerome, who, on that very day, had died at Bethlehem, and who, by this vision, wished to show that the happiness of Heaven, on which he had just entered, is far above all description.

On another occasion St. Augustine, in one of his discourses, bears testimony himself to this same truth, in the following words: "This glory, this beauty, this majesty, which is to be our happiness, is far above all words, thoughts, and feelings; what God has prepared for his friends surpasses all faith, exceeds our hope and love, our wishes and longings. This happiness we can indeed attain, but we can never sufficiently appreciate it; we can merit it, but we are unable to describe it."*

What audacity therefore it is to attempt to scan the Book of life, which, according to St. John's Revelations, is sealed with seven seals, and which no one in Heaven or on earth, except the Lamb of God, can open! He alone understands its mysteries, and He shall one day reveal to the elect the wonders of Heaven.

Yet, notwithstanding our inability and the intimate conviction we have of our weakness, we are allowed to raise our eyes to Heaven. We wish to seek it, that we

* St. Augustine, Serm. 37.

may find it; we wish to knock, that it may be opened to us; and we dare hope that the thought of it will fill our minds with light, our hearts with love and zeal. In order that our intellect may penetrate more deeply this mystery of the Divine will, as St. Paul calls it, we will, with simplicity of heart as well as of language, call to mind what Faith and the Holy Scriptures teach us, and what the Saints have written, on this matter.

Though the description of everything relating to Heaven be imperfect, yet, it will always be sweet and consoling to think on the joys that shall one day be ours, if we persevere to the end in our fidelity to God; to contemplate the inheritance which God in His goodness has promised us.

O Mary! to thee, then, I have recourse, and under thy protection I place myself, lest my ignorance and shallowness of thought may desecrate so high, so important a theme. Thou art our Mediatrix and Intercessor. If thou dost not refuse to me, the least of thy servants, thy maternal protection and mediation, God will not refuse me His assistance. For it is this God who, in eternity, shall reveal His Divinity to His elect, and who gives us, even here amid the darkness and the shadows of death, the light necessary, if not to understand and comprehend, at least to sigh for, long after and heartily desire the treasures of happiness, of beatitude, of glory which He has prepared for those that love Him.

THE CROWN OF HEAVEN.

PART I.

Parables Relating to Heaven.

HEAVEN OUR COUNTRY.

"The natural position of those living creatures to which will and understanding have not been given, is such as to have their eyes fixed on the earth: their end is confined to this life. To man, possessing reason and will, has been given an upright position, that his eye should naturally and without effort be turned from the earth, and be directed to the eternal mansions of Heaven! O man! thou art called to behold and adore the living God, and not to prostitute thy soul to earthly gratifications; not the common pleasures of animals, but a heavenly life, is to be thy portion for ever."*

"Heaven is intended for man, and man for Heaven; hence it is that before creating man,

* St. Greg. Naz.

God brought Heaven and earth into existence. And why did not God make man first? Good order and reason require that the palace should be got in readiness before the king's arrival; that the house should be built before it can serve as a dwelling. Heaven is the reward, and the happy one for whom it is waiting, is man; both are made to be eternally and intimately united."*

Here then, on this earth, as St. Paul so truly says, we are pilgrims, travelers, still far from the Lord. "For we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come."† It is all important therefore, for the Christian to know and to comprehend the greatness of his destination—"what the hope is of his calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."‡

For us, the earth is a place of trial; Heaven is our country, our inheritance, the promised fulfilment of our most exaggerated hopes of bliss. True, we have an earthly country, where we first saw the light; where our friends and brethren dwell; and where, to a certain extent we can be happy. Every one loves his own dear native land! How fondly the Frenchman thinks of his sunny France; the Pole of his frozen clime; the German of his powerful Fatherland; and Erin's Exile, of his sea-girt home! Yet our native land, even the entire earth with the treasures it possesses, is not our inheritance, our last end. Our

* Lactantius. † Hebr. xiii., 14. ‡ Ephes. i., 18.

hearts' very aspirations proclaim that we are destined for something higher, that we are born for something greater. Our earthly country is not ours, has never been promised to us. And indeed, were we to love it ever so dearly, ready to make every sacrifice for it, firmly attached to its interests, the day will come when we must leave it and all else ; or as the Lord says : there comes the night when no one can work. Death consigns the body to the cold, unfeeling earth, and sends the soul into another realm. "Oh ! ye Kings and Princes, ye great and rich ones of the earth !" exclaims St. Augustine, "The magnificent palaces, the stately edifices, the attractive goods of the world, are not yours ; you are here only as guests, and have farther to go ; you are strangers in the house you call your own. 'My father,' you say, 'my grandfather has bequeathed this house to me ; it is therefore justly mine.' Oh ! I understand your meaning," continues this same Doctor, "you mean to say that your ancestors took up their dwelling for a time in this house ; they have gone farther. Thus you too, after a short delay, must leave to your successors, what you call your own, and go farther. Here on earth, the grave is your only abiding house ; your true country is beyond it in Heaven." As it would be folly for a traveler to make his home of the hotel in which he puts up for the night, so it would be madness to take the way to Heaven for Heaven

itself. As the traveler who, after a long absence returning to his native country which he loves so dearly, does not allow his heart to be taken up with the places through which he passes, or the houses in which he lodges ; so ought it to be with Christians to whom this earth should be a place of passage and exile, where they are separated from their true, beloved country, and before whose eyes Heaven, the end of their journey, should ever be kept ; for everything depends on their reaching this point. Oh yes ! true love of country consists in the yearning to be eternally, perfectly happy ; to live a life of joy, of uninterrupted felicity ; to wear on our brows crowns of a glorious immortality ; to enjoy with God, the endless happy life of the Blessed. "Oh beloved land !" exclaims St. Augustine, "though far away from thy happy shores, we love to greet thee. Thou art that Land of Promise which the Father has prepared for his elect from the beginning of the world, where full, endless happiness awaits us !"

A man descended from an old race of Poland's nobility, a man distinguished by the most brilliant talents and endearing qualities, who, a few years ago, full of days and merits, and enjoying the respect and love of all to the last, departed from this world, left the following description of the most important moment of his life: "Formed in the German Universities, and thoroughly imbued with the principles of the new Philosophy, I showed no de-

termination in my life to serve Christ, the Church, our holy religion; yet I held fast to the faith with an attachment which I inherited from my pious mother. An intense love of country absorbed every thought of my mind, and every movement of my heart. In the high positions which a kind Providence led me to fill, I found many opportunities of doing much for my beloved country; and I hesitated not to make generous offerings from the means at my disposal. Although in general, I exteriorly led the life of a so-called honorable man, yet I might perhaps apply to myself what a distinguished author has written of himself: "La vie d'un coquin, je ne la connais pas; mais ce qu'on appelle la vie d'un honnete homme, c'est quelque chose d'abominable."* With the life of a rascal I am not acquainted; but what they call the life of an honorable man, is something shocking. When already pretty well advanced in years, I was blessed with the following dream: I thought I was carried to a high, very beautiful, and to me, entirely unknown country, where I beheld a prodigious number of heavenly forms that appeared to be writing with the greatest rapidity. I approached one of these strange looking beings, and asked him, 'what are you writing so carefully?" With the utmost benignity, he briefly answered: "We are God's Angels, and we are engaged in recording on the pages of the Book of

* Count de Maistre.

Life, the good actions of men in mortal life. This answer excited my curiosity to find out what claims my merits had given me to an eternal reward. I therefore gently whispered to the Angel: 'May I be allowed to see what is recorded on my page?' 'Why not?' was the assuring reply—and he immediately sought mine amongst many leaves, and handed it to me But imagine my astonishment, or rather my terror at seeing my page perfectly blank. 'Is it possible!' I exclaimed. 'All therefore that I have hitherto done, has no merit for eternal life! Yet I have toiled so much, made so many and such great sacrifices for my country!' 'Oh! my friend,' kindly remarked the Angel, 'on the pages which compose the Book of Life, we record only what men do for God and out of love for Him." I awoke, but the dream, like a double edged sword, had pierced my soul. I felt the great truth of the dream. 'What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' This earth is not our true country. We have been born for something greater. Our lives can be of no avail for eternal rewards, unless they are sanctified by an active Christianity. This dream which I considered a special call of Heaven, produced in my soul a thorough and instant change. Thenceforward, whilst continuing as before to love my earthly country, and labor for its welfare, I kept steadily before my mind, the eternal beatitude

of man. I resolved by truly Christian practices, and by the exercise of all the virtues belonging to my state of life, to deserve one day to be a denizen of that real Fatherland beyond the skies, to enjoy the beatific vision of God, the happiness and glory of Heaven.

HEAVEN OUR HAPPINESS.

Here on earth our hearts seek in vain for that happiness and contentment for which they incessently thirst. Joys afforded by the possession of earthly goods are only apparent ; they do not, they cannot satisfy the yearnings of the soul. Give the eye all that you will ; let it behold all that is grand, noble, magnificent ; it still craves to see something else ! Give to your senses all the gratifications this life can furnish, you remain still unhappy, unsatisfied ; you wish for more. A Saint tells us that this life is an immense fable, a deception of long duration. God has infused into our hearts so great a desire of happiness, that nothing less than a boundless, infinite, eternal joy can satiate us ; and thus we see that, not this earth whose very purest joys are deeply tinged with grief and sorrow, but Heaven whose pure joys no pain adulterates—the possession of supreme Good—is the object of our creation. From

his own experience, St. Augustine tells us that "the heart of man is unquiet till it rests in God." Yes, only in the possession of Heaven's Paradise can real happiness be found. But what is the extent, the intensity, the greatness of Heaven's joys? What is Paradise? St. Augustine writes: "Since Thou, O Lord! hast created so many blessings for this mean, perishable body; since Thy unbouunded generosity has enabled it to derive pleasure from the various objects which exist around it—from the sun, from the firmament, from the air, from the night, from the earth, from the sea, from light and darkness, from lakes and rivers, from forests and mountains, valleys and plains, from color and shade, from dew, rain, and wind, from the little birds, fishes, and animals, from trees, plants, and fruits—all of which are destined to serve and sustain our lives; how great, how numerous must be the joys Thou hast prepared in the heavenly country for those who love Thee! Since Thou bestowest so much upon us in prison, what may we not expect in the Royal Palace!" What is Paradise? It is a prodigy of the Divine Omnipotence; an invention of the Divine Wisdom, the height of Divine generosity, a prize worthy of Redemption, a good as great and endless as God Himself—for God Himself is Paradise. "I am thy reward exceeding great."* "God is Heaven," says St. Teresa; "what more,

* Gen., xv., 1.

what better than Himself can He give ?" All the joys and pleasures that Almighty God allows us to taste in this life, are only drops from the ocean of delights with which in Heaven, He will inundate His elect. All that beauty which here acts on us as a potent charm, is only the hem of His magnificent garment ; it is only the dim light of a rush candle in the presence of the midday sun. Seeing all that He has created for us here, so beautiful and lovely, we readily form some idea, though a very faint one, of the unutterable joy which awaits us in our Father's mansion. Oh ! a happiness, a beauty, a pleasure that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no heart has conceived, will be the inheritance of the Blessed, will rejoice their whole being, will satiate them for eternity. "In this holy City of God, there are no tears, no pain, no sadness, no suffering ; but joy abundant, unmixed with any grief; a sweet, eternal, imperishable peace will be the inheritance of the saints. There shall they have, not only all they desire, but in such abundance that nothing more remains which they can desire. Their hearts will be contented ; their souls will be immersed in a flood, in a sea of heavenly pleasure. Not simply the possession of the collection of every good, but the possession of the fountain, of the origin of every good, the possession of God Himself is their portion forever. The joy and happiness of God will not enter into their hearts ; this were too little ; but the beati-

fied souls will themselves enter the joy of the Lord; they will go into God's own endless, Divine happiness."*

But, oh my God! how weak, how circumscribed the human mind is! How inadequate to conceive, and how incapable human language is to express such happiness! How impossible it is to portray in words what the mind conceives only by faith, what we are striving to see, what we hope one day to experience, to enjoy! Nevertheless, let us hear on this subject, a few more sayings of the saints. In one of the visions with which St. Teresa was favored, the Lord allowed her to cast, as it were, a glance into the vestibule of eternal life. In her autobiography, she thus speaks of what she saw: "The things I there beheld, were so great, so wonderful, that the very least of them would suffice to throw a soul into raptures of delight, and infuse into it an excessive contempt for all the pleasures and goods of this life. No human mind can picture to itself anything like what was there shown to me. This vision filled me with such exceedingly great joy, and, if I may use the word, intoxicated me with such sweet sensations of contentment, that it is impossible for me to describe them. Whilst allowing me to enjoy this extraordinary sight, the Lord said to me: 'See, my daughter, what they lose who offend Me.' The effect produced in my soul by this entranc-

* St. Augustine.

ing view, was extreme contempt for every earthly object; all that men in this life esteem so highly, and desire so ardently to possess, appeared to me as supreme vanity, as empty smoke, as a mere imposition. Whilst suffering one day from an attack of those pains which almost constantly afflicted me, I received a visit from a charitable lady of very high rank, who, wishing to cheer me up a little, kindly showed me her costly jewels, and especially a very rich set of diamonds. I was strongly tempted to smile; but an intense feeling of compassion arose in my heart for the people of the world, who so highly prize these trifles; and I thought within me, how vastly different is the treasure the Lord has in store for us."

In a like manner while in ecstasy, St. Catharine of Sienna, was permitted by the Lord to see a ray of the heavenly glory; on returning to herself, she exclaimed: "I have seen wonders! wonders!!...." To the injunction of her confessor, that she should clearly describe what God had shown her, she replied: "I should consider myself guilty of a great crime were I to undertake such a work; for human words cannot express the value and beauty of Heaven's treasure."

St. Vincent Ferrer says: "Heaven's glory exceeds so much the brightest creations of our fancy, that all the sufferings of this life, nay, even all the tortures endured by the martyrs, would be insufficient to entitle one, I will not say, to the

kingdom of Heaven, but even to pass one single hour in that abode of every joy."

Let us conclude with the words of St. Augustine. "The glory of eternal light is so great, that in order to spend one single day in it, we should be ready to despise years of gratification, and all earthly possessions. In Heaven we possess all that we love, and it is impossible to desire anything more than we possess. In Heaven, nothing else than good can exist; nay! the Supreme Good Himself is there. God gives Himself to those who love Him; and the certainty that they shall ever possess and enjoy Him, constitutes their chief happiness. In Thy eternity and magnanimity, O Lord! Thou concealest for Thy servants an eternity of heavenly joys. For Thou art great, Oh God! and of Thy greatness there is no limit; the treasures of Thy wisdom are without number, Thy goodness without measure. It is likewise true, that the retribution and rewards which Thou hast in store for us, are also unlimited, innumerable, immeasurable. Thou art great, and Thy gifts are as great as Thou art; for Thou bestowest Thyself as our reward and our felicity. In Heaven, God will be the consummation of our happiness; we shall eternally behold Him, we shall never cool in our love for Him, we shall never tire in our praise of Him. Our hope is, that at the end of our life, we shall enter upon a life without end. There all is per-

fect, all is true, all is holy, all is everlasting. There our meat will be justice, our drink wisdom, our ornament immortality, our dwelling eternity."

HEAVEN A KINGDOM.

The Holy Scripture pictures to us in the following manner, the language of the wicked: "For our time is as the passing of a shadow, and there is no going back of our end; for it is fast sealed, and no man returneth. Come therefore and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures, as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments; and let not the flower of the time pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with roses, before they be withered: let no meadow escape our riot. Let none of us go without his part in luxury; let us every where leave tokens of joy; for this is our portion, and this our lot."* Thus spoke the fool in his heart, more than 4000 years ago. Alas! O Lord! how many unhappy persons are there in this our own day, who give utterance to precisely the same sentiments; who know not God and eternal life; but who strive to quench in earthly, sensual gratifications their innate thirst for happiness!

* Wisdom ii., 5, 9.

To deprive us of every pretext for yielding to suggestions of this nature, and to teach us the value of things eternal, God, the eternal Father, in His infinite mercy, sent us from Heaven His well beloved Son, who knows what Heaven is, and whose account of it, we can believe with undoubting faith. Let us then listen to our Divine Saviour. Before all, He calls Heaven a kingdom. Of the many passions which beset poor human nature, there is not one that seizes the heart of man so forcibly as ambition, the desire of possessing and exercising authority. To be a Prince or a Regent, is in the opinion of many, to possess honor, dignity, riches, power, joy, pleasure—in short, all that the world can give. The highest aim of man's ambition is to possess a crown, or even a coronet. In order to obtain authority over a city, a Province, a State, a Kingdom, there are many who would make any sacrifice, and who would not hesitate even to let loose on their country all the horrors of war, or stop at any crime. To secure an object of this kind, men sacrifice the peace of their conscience—nay! when it is an obstacle to the accomplishing of their ambitious view, they change, or cast away altogether the Religion out side of which they know they cannot be saved. History furnishes many facts to establish the truth of this remark. When permitted to tempt our Lord, the devil, though so very astute, though possessing so thorough a know-

ledge of the human heart, could discover no more powerful weapon for the combat in which he was about to engage with this most holy person whom he did not yet know to be the Son of God, than to offer Him wealth and authority. Therefore, even in the devil's estimation, a person having all the sanctity of God's eternal Son, could not hesitate to renounce God Himself in order to gain the riches and glory of the world. "All these will I give thee," he says, showing Him "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, if falling down thou wilt adore me." Matt. iv. 8-9. Hence we may understand how men hold so tenaciously to whatever authority, great or little, they possess. A willing, generous resignation of authority is a rare event. The Sovereigns who, in our day, have been compelled to renounce their crowns, and the popular Representatives who, as we ourselves have seen, refused so obstinately to let go the little hold which they had, or thought they had on authority, are indubitable proofs of this assertion.

All earthly Governments are but of short duration, and the so much coveted possession of them is inseparably bound up with manifold cares and anxieties. One kingdom alone lasts—that of which the Prophet says: "But in the days of those kingdoms, the God of Heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed. . . . and it shall break in pieces, and shall consume all these king-

doms, and itself shall stand forever." * Now this wonderful kingdom is the type, not only of the Catholic Church, God's kingdom on earth, but also and especially of the heavenly kingdom where Christ with His saints eternally rules; and of which the Angel Gabriel says: "Of His kingdom there shall be no end." † Our Lord likens, in an especial manner, the happiness of eternity to a kingdom. In that ever-memorable discourse which he preached on the mount, and in which He explains to His diciples the principles of His truly wonderful doctrinal and moral teaching, He promises to the poor and the persecuted for justice' sake, Heaven under the enticing form of a kingdom. He makes this promise still more solemnly in His description of the General Judgment, where we are told the Son of God, when admitting His elect into the eternal mansions, will use the words: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." ‡ When commissioning His Apostles to preach the Gospel to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," He says: "Tell them the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." § In fact, there is nothing of more frequent occurrence in the New Testament, than to describe the recompense of the elect under the figures of Dominion—of Power—of Royalty. The greatness of this king-

* Dan. ii., 44. † St. Luke i., 33. ‡ Matt. xxv., 34.
§ Matt. x., 7.

dom surpasses the creations of the most brilliant imaginations. If we feel ourselves enobled by the conviction that we are members of God's kingdom on earth, that is to say, that we belong to the Holy Catholic Church which unites in the bosom of one and the same family, the inhabitants of every land, of every quarter of the world, the faithful of every nation and of every race ; what shall we feel when the sight of the immensity of God's eternal kingdom bursts in upon our astonished souls ; when we shall ourselves possess our thrones ; when we shall be forever united with all the blessed, with all the saints who have ever lived, from the days of Adam till the instant preceding that of the Universal Judgment ! All nationalities are there embodied in one universal brotherhood, in one great family of children of the same Father. In that kingdom all are loving friends, all are heirs of God. There, no difference of language can ever disturb harmonious intercourse. The language of Heaven's kingdom is the language of love—a language intelligible to all. No envy, no enmity, no sin, no passion can be found in God's dominion. All will be at peace with millions of brethren, and at peace with God. The ruler of this kingdom, "the king of ages, immortal,"* is not only the king of armies, "the king of kings,"† the absolute monarch before whom all knees shall bend, the "king of Peace," "the

* I. Tim. i., 17. † Ibid, vi., 15.

king of Glory"—but He is also the tender, loving Father of every individual inhabitant of the heavenly Jerusalem. I will be his God and he shall be my child, the Lord says of each one of them. The blessed indeed are not simply the subjects of His divine majesty; they are not considered creatures of little importance, or valuable slaves. No! far from it. God will allow each one of the elect, according to the degree of merit he has attained, to share in the government of his heavenly kingdom. All will be kings. They are that chosen generation, that holy nation, that purchased people, that royal priesthood whom God has called out of darkness into His marvellous light.* To serve such a Lord is to rule. The least of Heaven's denizens possesses more authority, and is far more glorious than all the princes of the world, "and His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads....and they shall reign forever and ever."† "Hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love Him!"‡ O! we know with the certainty of faith, that "if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him,"§ in Heaven. Yes, most assuredly, we shall partake of God's own authority, we shall enter into His power, and each beatified soul, who has

* I. Pet. ii., 9. † Apoc. xxii., 3-5. ‡ James ii., 5.
§ II. Tim. ii., 12.

achieved the victory over the flesh, the world, and hell, will merit, through the inheritance of eternal felicity, to hear addressed to herself these words of our Lord: "To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me in my throne; as I also have overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne."*

After such reflections, it is quite intelligible to me why St. Aloysius, on the death of his father, renounced the coronet and splendor of a duke, and embraced the humble state of a poor religious; why the young King Hermenegild chose rather to be a martyr, and die by the hand of his own father, than to deviate one iota from the purity of the Catholice faith: They preferred the heavenly to perishable, earthly royalty. I can now understand why Charles V. laid down his imperial crown, and sought time to prepare himself for death. I now understand why so many Christian princes and kings so earnestly labored, by the practice of virtue, by the protection they afforded the Church, and by their zeal for the faith, not to lose an immortal, heavenly crown, after having worn an earthly, perishable one. Let us then from our inmost soul exclaim: "Thy kingdom come."† According to the dignity of my vocation as man and Christian, an earthly kingdom cannot satisfy my ambition. It cannot impart to me an abiding happiness. "Oh! permit

* Apoc. iii., 21. † Luke xi., 2.

not yourselves to be deceived by the brilliancy of the imperial crown," writes St. Chrysostom; "do not look at the ostentation with which princes are surrounded; consider rather their agitated souls, their troubled thought, their intense anxiety at the moment of death, which tears away every thing from them." It is for the heavenly kingdom we have been born. We wish, at every cost, to attain this most admirable kingdom of eternal felicity which Jesus Christ has merited for us and promised to us. We wish, to secure for ourselves this kingdom of honor and glory, of which there shall be no end, in which the first shall be last, and the last, first; this kingdom of promise, in which we shall live and reign with God forever and ever. Amen.

HEAVEN A TREASURE.

A man pretty well advanced in years, I will not say of what nation, or from what part of the world, was, by accidental circumstances brought into relation with one of God's zealous servants, who used to make heaven a frequent and an agreeable subject for his reflections. In the course of a conversation of a very serious nature, this person asked the elderly gentleman: "Well, sir, tell me what is then the object of your being? Why

have you been brought into existence? Why are you in this life?" The question disconcerted him; it was so strange, so new, so unexpected! It was an idea to which his mind was so unaccustomed, nay, with which it was so entirely unacquainted that, for the moment, he could not answer. After a little hesitation, during which, no doubt, all that he cared about possessing passed before his mind, he replied: "We are here to acquire honor, distinction, and riches." An answer of this kind we seldom hear; but if we look at the lives and conduct, I will not say, of one class of men, but of the great majority of the human family, we shall be very much tempted to think that they might give the same answer which this old gentleman gave. Truly, the great mass of the earth's inhabitants seem not to think, or even to know, that they have been created for Heaven, for eternity, for the possession of the supreme, infinite Good, for unutterable delights in paradise, which by the good use of their freedom during this life, they must merit and secure. Alas! alas! men actually live in this world, as if their last end were nothing higher than to acquire wealth and honors; as if they hoped for nothing beyond earthly happiness and sensual gratification. The nobility of their souls, the high dignity belonging to them as children of God, and as heirs of His kingdom, and the happiness of their real vocation, are, it would appear, abso-

lutely concealed from their view. This, our Lord intimates, when He calls the kingdom of heaven a "Hidden Treasure." "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field: which a man having found, hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field."* A treasure is a quantity of gold, silver, and jewels, which one accidently finds, and of whose existence he had till then been ignorant He who has found a treasure, imagines he has discovered the spring of every joy; and therefore, in order that he may not be deprived of it, he, in his turn hides it, and so securely, that no one else can find it. Then to acquire indisputable right to it, he sells all he possesses in order to procure the means of purchasing the field in which it lies concealed. But how egregious is the error of him who imagines that the possession of gold, or the holding of property, affords true happiness! "For they that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires." † "Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation." ‡ On another occasion, our Lord adds: "Lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven—where thieves do not break through, nor steal." § "And he spoke a similitude to them saying: The land of a certain rich man brought

* Matt. xiii., 44. † I. Tim. vi., 9. ‡ Luke vi., 24.
§ Matt. vi., 20.

forth plenty of fruits. And he thought within himself saying: What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said: This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and will build greater: and into them will I gather all things that are grown to me, and my goods. And I will say to my soul: Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest, eat, drink, and make good cheer. But God said to him: Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he," concludes our Lord: "that layeth up treasures for himself, and is not rich towards God." * The meaning of the similitude of the hidden treasure, as well as that of the merchant, who, seeking good pearls, found one of great value, and sold all that he had and purchased it, scarcely needs an explanation. These similitudes are intended to remind us that in Heaven we shall possess treasures of infinitely more value than the shining but unfeeling gold, and brilliant but lifeless gems. No violence or injustice can force this treasure from us. It is exposed to no accident, it will last as long as God is God; its possession makes us unspeakably happy; it is not given—we are to acquire a title to it, by the strenuous efforts of a Christian and virtuous life; we have it in our power to increase it indefinitely. The most in-

* Luke xii., 16-21.

significant action, nay! even a thought can, down to the very last moment of our lives, be made to augment this our treasure in heaven. In this heavenly kingdom, God distributes, with divine generosity, these immense stores of His grace and mercy, to each individual soul, according to the degree of merits she may have obtained; the capacity of each to receive is the measure of his liberality. The most ardent desire of the Almighty, is to increase in each of us, this capacity of enjoyment. And indeed, if, whilst yet in the flesh, we ask the aid of His helping hand; if we labor, suffer, struggle for this purpose, He will most assuredly enable us to succeed in acquiring for ourselves the power of enjoying Him in a supreme degree. The mystery of the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, enables us to understand more readily, God's design of communicating his heavenly treasures to us according to our own will. In this Sacrament, in this spiritual nourishment, Jesus offers us all that He has—His body, His blood, His heart, His soul, His humanity, His Divinity. "God's infinite wisdom," says St. Augustine, "knows nothing better to give us; God's Almighty power, God's infinite love can give us nothing greater or holier" In this Sacrament, God has, so to say, poured out all the riches of His mercy. If we fail to gather from it, treasures which we can take into eternal life, the fault is not His.

The venerable Balthazar Alvarez, S. J., St. Teresa's confessor, a great master of the interior life, was accustomed to prepare himself with great care and fervor for the offering of the Holy Sacrifice. On one occasion, whilst rapt in meditation before the adorable Sacrament, his spirit saw in the Sacred Host, the Child Jesus, whose little outstretched arms were laden with the most costly pearls and jewels: and at the same time, he heard Him say: "Oh! that I could find some one to accept them from me!" "If, then, you have a desire to become rich; if you have a hankering after wealth;" exclaims St. Augustine, "gather treasures for Heaven where alone they are secure against every accident." Heaven is the field in which the treasure has been concealed; its felicity is that precious gem which we can all find. He who has found it; he who has discovered that all earthly goods and treasures are only dust and ashes, and that we cannot take them with us into the house of Eternity, sells all that he has; that is, he renounces everything, at least in spirit, and is ready to make any sacrifice, break off any attachment, in order to place the hidden treasure of Heaven in security, to become eternally happy.

HEAVEN, A MARRIAGE FEAST.

"Blessed are they that are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb."* Still more blessed is the Bride herself with whom Jesus Christ will form in his kingdom a union of eternal love, and with whom He will celebrate that great, never-ending Marriage Feast. Every Christian knows that, in Heaven, we shall not feel those low wants which here on earth are common to men and animals. Those who stand before the throne of God shall hunger and thirst no more; they shall suffer neither heat nor cold. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more."† All that is earthly will have passed away. We shall be as the Angels of God. But because our imagination is, in this our state of viators, unable to picture to itself the joy of Heaven, Jesus has, to satisfy the craving we feel for honor, likened Heaven to a kingdom; to satisfy our longing for riches, He has likened it to a hidden treasure. The Parable of the Marriage Feast shows that Heaven's joys will gratify the irresistable desire of happiness which we all experience in our souls.

All that men deem agreeable, joyful, glorious in this world, will, in an infinite degree, be ours in Heaven; and, since on earth, a Wedding, a

* Apoc., xix, 9. † Ibid, xxi., 4.

Marriage Festival, bespeaks the greatest joy and gaiety, our Lord wishing to give us at least a faint idea of the abundant pleasures which we may expect in the next life, compares the happiness derived from the possession and enjoyment of Divine Love, to a Marriage Supper. "Then shall the kingdom of Heaven be like to ten virgins who, taking their lamps went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride. And five of them were foolish, and five wise. But the five foolish having taken their lamps, did not take oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with the lamps. And the bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise: Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. The wise answered saying: Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you, go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. Now while they went to buy, the bridegroom came: and they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. But at last came also the other virgins saying: Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answering said: Amen, I say to you, I know you not."*

This parable is readily understood; Jesus is the bridegroom. The bride is not in general, the

* Matt. xxv., 1-12.

Catholic Church, but each individual human soul. The lamps are the light of Faith. The oil represents our good works. The delay of the bridegroom is the time of earthly life. The cry at midnight is the dread summons of death. "The bridegroom cometh"—is the invitation to the heavenly Marriage to which Jesus conducts all those souls He finds watching and ready; that is to say—abounding in Faith and good works. But should we neglect to enable ourselves to profit by the moment, when Jesus invites us into Paradise—and we "know not the day nor the hour"*—the door will be shut, and for the endless days of eternity, shall never again be opened to us. Let the foolish virgins knock as loud and as long as they please, the same unvarying, but terrifying answer must ever ring in their ears: "It is too late; it is too late; you have neglected the opportunity; I know you not. You must remain strangers to Heaven, its joys and its happy inmates, during the long dark night of eternity." But what pleasure, what delights await those who are prepared to accompany the bridegroom to this joyous festival! This alliance of heavenly love with God, unites the soul so intimately with Him, that she is in some way, but one with Him. Having once formed this alliance, we shall never lose sight of God's infinite glory; we shall ever see Him face to face. This sight of God will change

* Matt. xxv., 13.

us into Himself—we shall be His perfect likenesses. When we shall see Him as He is, we shall be like unto Him ; we shall be partakers of His own beatitude. The joy of a soul that, through this intimate union with God, shall be deemed worthy to celebrate this Marriage Festival, will be so great, so abundant, so complete, so unspeakable, that, as St. Bernard says, nothing like it can be found on earth : "All earthly joys compared with the heavenly Wedding Feast, are sadness ; all pleasure is pain, all sweetness is bitterness, all beauty is deformity."

From the image of a temporal marriage supper, we can judge of the great joys of Heaven where the pleasure is not for a moment, is not that derived from the gratification of the senses, or the happiness which creatures can impart. Our beatitude is not limited to the enjoyment even of the Angels and the heavenly Powers ; God Himself, with all His beauty, His greatness, His glory, is our inheritance, our "exceeding great reward." Floods of heavenly joys and happiness will inundate our hearts which Divine love will have inseparably united with the source of every good.

St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, had been married before his elevation to the dignity of Priest and Bishop. He had one daughter. When, on account of his firm attachment to the Faith, the persecutors of the Church had him banished to

Asia, he entrusted his daughter, yet a child, to a Christian family by whom she was to be properly instructed. In the course of years, when the girl had reached the marriageable age, a young man of a noble and wealthy family, asked the hand of the young maiden now adorned with all the charms which an accomplished education, exquisite beauty, gentle manners and Christian virtues could bestow. Mindful of the fourth commandment, she deferred her answer till she should obtain the consent and blessing of her beloved but exiled father. She, therefore, wrote to him in his place of banishment, and received from him the following answer: "The young man who aspires to your hand, is of too low a condition for you. He is not handsome enough for you; he is not rich enough for you; he is not amiable enough for you; his attainments are not those you could wish to find in a spouse every way worthy of you. Your heart is too noble to allow you to form so low an alliance. I have discovered for you another suitor, the son of a king. His beauty, his goodness, his wealth, his power surpass all that your fancy can picture to you. I am convinced that, as soon as you will know him, you will love him; and you will be happy in the sincerity and intensi y of his love for you. When I return home, as I hope soon to do, I shall bring you his portrait; a little later, he will come himself and wed you. If you wish to

follow the advice of your father, reject the offers of the young man, noble though he be, who has wished to make you his bride; and patiently await the arrival of a spouse worthy in every way of your warmest affection." The daughter followed the advice of her father; and on his return to France, St. Hilary showed the maiden the Image of the Crucified Jesus, the heavenly Bridegroom of pure souls. She was delighted with the choice made for her, and took the firm resolution to consecrate her heart entirely and exclusively to the love of Jesus. Not long afterwards, this virgin, yet in the charming bloom of youth, lay on her death-bed; for it is eternally true, that we know neither the day nor the hour, when the Lord of life and death shall ask our souls of us. Standing by the couch of his dying daughter to whom he had brought Jesus, in the most Holy Sacrament, as a viaticum, and showing to her languishing eyes the Lamb of God, whom she was about to receive into her heart, Hilary with all the feeling of a father, and the holy joy of one who had suffered for the Faith, addressed these words to her: "Behold my daughter! the Bridegroom cometh! This is the royal spouse to whom I united thee in marriage, on whom thou hast bestowed thy heart and thy love. Enter into the joy of the Lord; go to the heavenly Wedding Feast, and through the union of Divine Love, be eternally happy."

O! may our state too, enable us one day to rejoice and burst forth into exclamations of joy, and give honor to God, when the moment of the Marriage with the Lamb, which He has prepared for His Bride, will have come! "Blessed are they that are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb."*

We have now meditated on three comparisons: let us again open the Holy Scriptures. Here we find many other similes which picture to us the glory and happiness of our Eternal home. There is the simile of a Sower who goes out into the field to sow his grain; of the Householder who so generously rewards his laborers; of the good use of the talents; of the Great Feast; of a Delightful Garden; of the Prize victoriously borne off; of a crown of the City of God; of the House of the Lord; etc., etc. But all these similitudes, although having reference to objects, which, in the eyes of men, are most excellent and desirable, are nothing in comparison with the reality itself. It would appear that even our Lord Himself could find no words to describe to us, in human language, the happiness of the Blessed; or it is perhaps truer to say, that the human intellect is incapable of comprehending what God has prepared for us in Heaven. We who yet walk in the darkness of the flesh, cannot see the wonders of the Lord. We poor miserable creatures to whom

* Apoc. xix., 9.

so many things around us are mysteries, pretend to grasp with our mind, the prodigious mysteries of Heaven! But it is precisely the simplicity of the Scriptures, and the impossibility to explain the joys of Heaven, which prove to us, in the clearest manner, how immeasurably, how infinitely great they must be. "This is my consolation, that I serve a Lord whose greatness, whose power and majesty surpass my thoughts and all the efforts of my imagination." St. Gregory. Could I understand the Beatitude of the Just, it would be insufficient for me. But because the mystery of Heaven is unfathomable, faith assures me that I shall there find happiness never-ending, joy never disturbed by a passing cloud of sadness; health uninterrupted by a moment's ailing; light unobscured by darkness; life without fear of death. There no weight of years changes the perpetual youth and beauty of the inhabitants; there no fickle or wicked heart can cool the ardor of our love; there we have no anxious fears about the duration of our happiness, or the sorrow that may succeed. Every thing is decided for eternity; we have entered eternity, we live in eternity, our life is eternal; for God, our chief Good, our supreme Good, is our portion for Eternity.

PART II.

Meditations on Heaven.

THE THOUGHT OF HEAVEN.

"No! if we earnestly will it, it is not so difficult to lead here on earth, a pious, holy life, the image of that we are to lead in Heaven. The great secret of success consists in our relishing heavenly things. When our souls are dejected, discouraged by the trials which Providence wishes us to overcome, let us raise our eyes to Heaven, and we will not hesitate to make the sacrifice which God requires of us. Once mastered by the Love of Heaven, we shall lose all esteem for the earthly views and objects that formerly claimed our admiration. Behold the little bird: when raised on its tiny wing high in the air, it mocks the futile effort of the fowler; but let it descend to the earth, it is soon in the power of the wily sportsman. Thus it is with us: if our thoughts are ever directed to Heaven, we are secure against the temptations and the vanity of the world."*

"In Heaven, there is only one virtue, which

* St. Augustine.

consists in loving Him whom we see ; just as our happiness consists in possessing Him whom we love. From this inexhaustible fountain of beatitude flow consolations to soothe the sorrows even of this passing life, and graces whereby we are enabled to practice temperance, fortitude, justice, and prudence. If we are earnest in our desire to secure this eternal repose ; if we are sincere in our efforts to attain this unutterable contemplation of Infinite Truth, we shall be terrified by no difficulty ; we shall find strength to renounce even innocent joys and gratifications, to resign ourselves to sufferings, to endure misery with heroic patience, to conquer temptations."*

"It is impossible for man to enjoy the goods of this world and those of the next ; to give himself up without restraint, here on earth, to all the pleasures of the senses, and in Heaven to all the pleasures of the soul ; to flutter from one indulgence to another ; to make everything a gratification here and in Heaven. Victory supposes a battle : this life is a severe battle, and only after it, can we enjoy the sweets of victory. Should you find yourself beset with trials, think on the reward. Were the vinedresser not to think of the coming Autumn and of the rich crop that is to recompense his labor, he would soon lose courage, and abandon his vineyard. Do you, in like manner, think of the great reward in store

* St. Gregory.

for you, and you will despise the sufferings from which you now shrink in dismay. You will, in astonishment, ask—how is it possible, that for so little, Almighty God gives so much? And indeed for a labor which is not to last for ever, we acquire a right to a reward that shall last for eternity."*

These words of the Holy Fathers show us why it is so important, so consoling and so necessary, frequently to think on the kingdom of Heaven.

He whose mind is earnestly on his heavenly country, will soon ask an account of his conscience, put everything in order, and be changed for the better. Who indeed can deny that, though perhaps in different degrees, we are all in need of something of this change? The step from infidelity to Faith, from faith to the practice of religious obligations, from sin to penance, we call conversion. The change from penance to virtue, from lukewarmness to fervor, from fervor to ardent piety, or from piety to sanctity is a true conversion. Now of all Christian truths, there is none that more forcibly incites us to take the step of conversion corresponding to the want of our souls, than the thought of Heaven. The hope of an eternal reward, of an eternal happiness, of the eternal love and possession of God, according to the degree in which we have declared ourselves for Him, ex-

* St. Augustine.

ercises over our hearts an irresistible power. A soul thoroughly impressed with this truth, will heroically burst all the bonds which, till now, have held her in a state of imperfection; and seeing earthly attractions in their true light, she will acknowledge them to be vain and passing, and at any and every sacrifice, she will cling to God's love and friendship.

In the days of St. Augustine, there lived in Rome a noble lady called Melania. She was a Christian; but on account of her immense wealth, her blooming youth and acknowledged beauty, it fared with her as it had before, and will again fare with many of her kind. The deceitful appearance and charm of earthly goods decoyed her into the meshes of vanity, and filled her with an undue attachment to things of this life, and an inordinate desire of pleasing by outward show. A young man named Volusian, a relation of hers, as yet not a Christian, left Rome to spend some time in Milan, where he became acquainted with the great St. Augustine, who spared no pains to convince the young man of the absurdity of paganism, and to win him to Christianity. Yet, since every conversion is, not the work of man, but the triumph of grace, this learned and love-inflamed Doctor was unable to gain over to the Faith the heart of young Volusian. During his absence from Rome, however, Melania happened one day to meditate on

the kingdom of Heaven. This meditation oft repeated in the light of faith, produced in a short time, such an effect on her noble heart, that she saw as clearly as the light of day, that all the passing joys of earth, are, in comparison with those of Heaven, thoroughly despicable; that the acquisition of this kingdom is the first, the most important affair; and that no sacrifice however great, can be deemed such when it is to be rewarded with never-ending joys. In consequence of these reflections, Melania, who had embraced the married state, and who therefore was not free to follow a new vocation, changed her views and habits. For she renounced her pleasures, her vanities, her love of dress, and devoted herself to the service of her neighbor, to works of penance and to the practice of virtue; so that there was a total alteration in her person and manners. She not only did away with the former splendor of her life; but she resolutely avoided even ornamenting her person; for she no longer used what, in former days, she was wont to employ to add to the natural beauty of her personal appearance, for the purpose of attracting attention and admiration.

After a long absence, Volusian returned to Rome, and hastened to visit his cousin Melania. But when he saw the great change in herself, in her dress and apartments, he could scarcely credit his eyes. "Ah, Melania! what is all this?

what has brought you to this pass ?" he hurriedly asked. "Heaven! Heaven has done all this!" quietly answered Melania. Then with all the zeal of holy love, she related to him how a few considerations on eternal life, on the kingdom of Heaven, had enlightened her mind, and enabled her to reform her heart, her disposition, her whole conduct ; how much happier she had ever since been ; how she now enjoyed a peace of soul, to which, hitherto, she had been a total stranger ; how, by the strength derived from this glance beyond the grave, she found herself able to despise every trifle that formerly exercised such sway over her mind ; how every thing earthly and passing appeared to her insignificant in comparison with Heaven and Eternity. This inflamed gush of zeal proceeding from her inmost soul, together with her living example, and the glowing description she gave him of the happiness she experienced in the service of God, and in the hope of eternal life, produced so deep an impression on Volusian, that without further delay, he determined to renounce paganism, and to devote himself as a good Christian to the service of God and the practice of virtue. Thus we see that the thought of Heaven was able to accomplish what the enlightened words of an Augustine could not effect. Yes ! It is a fact admitted by the experience of all, that man can raise himself above,

and despise terrestrial pleasures only by elevating his thoughts to Heaven.

Another consoling effect which reflections of this kind produce is, to render the yoke of the Lord sweet, and his burden light. The thought of a happy eternity and the conviction that one watches our every act, and wishes to reward it infinitely, encourage us to withstand the various and violent storms of this miserable life. Rays from the holy hope thus engendered, dispel the darkness which, at times, envelops the inferior parts of our souls. There is no complaint which this thought does not stifle; no disturbance it does not quiet; no impatience it does not check; no care it does not sweeten; no pain it does not alleviate; no sorrow it does not ease; no tear it does not dry. The unshaken expectation of eternal life and of inconceivable joys, makes the most grievous afflictions tolerable. It cures every ill; it sweetens all the bitter moments of our life. "The glory that we expect"—the seraphic Francis was wont to say; "is so great that, for its sake, I joyfully bear every pain, every ill, every calumny, every persecution that the wickedness of men or the malice of hell can let loose upon me." This thought, considered in the light of faith, enables us to understand what to many has been a great source of error, namely: how Divine Providence frequently per-

mits in this life, innocence to be oppressed, and crime to triumph. A day of reckoning, a day of retribution shall come. As long as we bear this in mind, every thing is supportable ; if our hearts are set on the heavenly Jerusalem, we are armed against every temptation. A certain Abbot, seeing one of his Monks sad and downcast, approached him and said : "Dear Brother, how is this? Why should we be sad? Let those grieve and sigh under the weight of their cares, whose aspirations soar no higher than the earth; to whom the hope of Heaven brings no consolation. To us has Jesus Christ promised eternal felicity. Our hope does not deceive. We are going straight on towards Heaven. Why should we be sorrowful?" Oh! that men understood this great truth! To think on Paradise would give them strength and constancy, would enable them to persevere in the combat to the end, and thus, even here on earth, make them happy. St. Stephen was filled with transports of joy, even whilst being stoned to death, because he raised his eyes to Heaven, and saw Jesus at the right hand of the Father, waiting to crown His faithful servant, with eternal life, to reward him with eternal felicity.

A LONGING FOR HEAVEN.

For many long and dreary years, a prisoner had been languishing within the dismal walls of a jail. Deprived of light and freedom, and bound in chains, he suffered hunger, cold and grief; he beheld himself deserted by all those whose former acquaintance had given him a right to count on a lasting friendship. He endured unutterable pains, the result of his long and close confinement. Now is it not evident that he sighed for the moment when the prison doors would be thrown open to him, and himself restored to light, to liberty and to his family?

When exposed to all the furious storms and the other terrible dangers of the sea; at one time on the point of being engulfed in its yawning waves, at another driven by the furious tempest towards threatening rocks, is it not natural that the poor Mariner after the fatigues and anxiety of his long and painful voyage, should ardently desire to hear from the masthead, the gladdening words: "Land, Ahoy! Land!"

After having endured all the privations of war; after having waded through the blood, and passed through the perils of the fields of battle for liberty, home and country, is not the soldier allowed to long for the moment, when the enemy

will be defeated, the decisive battle won, peace established, liberty secured, and himself restored to the bosom of his anxious family? When absent from the paternal roof, from tender parents, beloved and affectionate brothers and sisters; and, that he may improve his mind, and fit himself for honorable positions in the world, obliged to devote himself to useful and necessary, but still laborious and distasteful exercises, shall the boy or youth be blamed for wishing for the happy day, on which his college course will terminate; when he will receive the academical honors due to those who have the good sense and moral courage to persevere in their studies; and return to his home, enjoy his inheritance, and be an honor and a comfort to the parents who have made so many sacrifices for him? Shall not the loving betrothed await, with impatient affection, the return of her Bridegroom from a foreign land whither he has gone? Shall she not wish for the day which will unite them in the bands of holy wedlock? What! and should not a Christian long for Heaven, the abode of real liberty, the harbor of salvation, the true Fatherland, the rich inheritance, the happy wedding feast? We know with the certainty of faith, and alas! but too keenly feel its truth, that we are here on earth, like unhappy prisoners, pining away inside frowning walls erected by the strong arm of justice; like the mariner, tossed to and fro on

the raging sea, ever fearing to be deprived of the pleasure of gladdening, by his safe return, the loved ones at home; like the warrior, surrounded by the horrors and dangers of battles; like a child, restrained by the discipline necessary for his intellectual and moral training; like the betrothed, separated from him she loves. Oh yes! we can readily understand how it is, that men who are alive to their high calling; who feel the weight of this life; who see surrounding objects in the light of Faith; who think on Heaven, its greatness and its eternal beatitude; feel a true, sincere longing to be free from present afflictions of spirit, and to enjoy eternal repose. How naturally do such persons experience an insatiable thirst to have the sweet hope of Heaven's joys fulfilled. "O joy, above all joys!" exclaims St. Augustine: "joy beyond which no other is conceivable! when shall I possess thee; when shall I be able to call thee mine? When shall I attain to the possession of God in whom I shall find all that my heart can desire? O eternal kingdom wherein shines a light that shall never be extinguished; where dwells a peace that surpasses all we have ever felt, or can ever experience; where the souls of the Elect shall rest from their labors, rejoice in their victories, and settle down in a kind of holy intoxication of perfect delights! O Heaven! How great is thy glory! There, O Lord! the saints clothed with light as

with a garment, shall govern with us, and bear on their brows, crowns of the most costly jewels." Yes, this longing sensation must be in the heart of every one who thinks on Heaven; who hopes and desires one day to secure its possession.

The end of this earthly life; the last step each human being has to make, and which takes us all beyond the grave—Death is indeed an unwelcome thought. No one feels any particular liking for it; no one dies willingly. As a punishment of sin, it is and must be a bitter chalice which every child of Eve, because born a child of wrath, must drink to the dregs and the very dregs themselves. But the hope grounded on our Redemption; the consciousness of a virtuous, Christian life; confidence in the merits of Christ; the assurance that we are dying children of the Catholic Church, will sweeten the bitterness of this unavoidable draught of the chalice of death, and will enkindle in our souls a longing for that which awaits the just beyond the grave.

Let us open the Holy Scriptures. We see a king who had been in deed a great sinner; but who, by true repentance, became a man according to God's own heart. What sentiment was predominant in David's soul? Ah! no other than the desire of Heaven, the longing to possess the supreme Good. "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water"—he exclaims in his Psalms: "so my soul panteth after thee, O

God."* "Who will give me the wings of a dove, and I will fly and be at rest."† "When shall I come and appear before the face of God?"‡ "Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged!"§ "Better is one day in thy courts above thousands,"‖ in the abode of sinners. "For thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever."¶ This holy longing shall find an echo in every heart that has comprehended Christianity in all its depth and greatness. The sinner must sigh after the freedom from the slavery of sin, after the acquisition of heavenly glory. And, as a Father of the Church tells us: He who sighs not on earth as a stranger, as an exile, cannot expect the happiness of entering Paradise, as a citizen of the heavenly Fatherland. Would it not be the blindest folly, nay! even downright stupidity, on the part of one who had learned to know its worth and importance, to remain indifferent about such a future? Happy they whose souls are thoroughly impressed with this truth, with this desire to possess Heaven's joys! Transient, perishable goods and pleasures cannot again endanger their salvation. Their wishes and desires are directed to that which lasts for ever. "How the earth disgusts me," exclaims the love-inflamed holy Ignatius; "when I contemplate Heaven!" "How far does this

* Ps. xli, 2. † Ps. liv., 7. ‡ Ps. xli., 3. § Ps. cxix., 5.
‖ Ps. lxxxiii., 11. ¶ Ps. lxxii., 26.

tend toward Heaven?" St. Aloysius used to ask in the various little incidents of the day. Such sentiments should be for us too, a guiding principle for our whole life. Our love would not then, as is too often the case, be captivated by perishable beauty; but it would soar to the eternal beauty, the source of beauty itself. The heavenly Jerusalem would then be the object of our longings, the end of our desires and of our every hope. When informed that the Pope had bestowed upon him the Cardinal's Hat, St. Philip Neri, with childlike simplicity, threw his cap up into the air, and exclaimed: "Paradise! Paradise!" as much as to say—he had proposed to his ambition a higher and nobler object than even ecclesiastical dignities. A Brother of the order of St. Francis used to fall into raptures whenever he heard the word "Heaven." In his dying moments, St. Aloysius said: "we go with joy." One of those present asked: "whither?" The saint answered: "To Heaven, to Heaven!" When the Holy Viaticum was brought to St. Teresa, she began to sing—and she exclaimed: "The happy moment after which I have so long sighed, has at length arrived!" In conclusion, let us again listen to St. Augustine. He has left us three little Books which describe his thirst after eternal life: His *Meditations*, his little *Manual*, and his *Soliloquies*. If any one wishes to know the tone and the extreme tenderness of a loving heart, let him read

these little Books. In one of them, he thus expresses himself: "O! heavenly country! country of security! we greet thee, we raise our hearts to thee; in this valley of tears we sigh for thee, and desire most earnestly to reach thee. Oh beautiful, glorious day! Oh day of rejoicing which no evening obscures, no night can end! Oh day, on which we shall hear the sweet words: 'enter into the joy, the house of the Lord!' O Jerusalem, Mother of the Elect, holy City of God, beloved Bride of Jesus! how my heart loves thee! how my soul longs to see thy splendor!"

In an exhortation to the newly Baptized he says: "If you wish to be invincible in the midst of the temptations of this world, ah inflame and strengthen in your hearts this longing after the eternal Jerusalem! Fly, oh fly those torments that last for ever, those tortures that never cease! Allow your souls to be inflamed by love and desire for the life of the Elect, for the abode of the Just, where activity is never weary, where repose is not tedious, where we can ever praise God, ever find a new kind of happiness! There no cares trouble the soul, there no pains rack the body; there our warfare ceases; there no anxiety for those dear to us can disturb the calm of our souls. There God is everything to us—He is the entire happiness of our souls."

INDIFFERENCE ABOUT THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN.

In his visit to Rome, seeing the riches, the grandeur, the splendor of Theodoric's court, St. Fulgentius said to those who accompanied him: "If Rome, a city here on earth, can boast of such splendor, how beautiful, how glorious the heavenly Jerusalem must be? And if the votaries of idle vanity enjoy in this world so much honor, what exultation, what glorification, what triumph will not God prepare for those who know and contemplate Truth itself in its infinite source!" Thus the souls that are penetrated with a longing for the goods of Heaven, and inflamed with a desire to possess what is beyond the grave, are led from the contemplation of visible, to that of invisible objects; from the view of earthly pomp and grandeur, to thoughts of heavenly glory. But how great is the blindness of those whose hearts and minds the joys of this life so absorb, whom this world's pleasures, in spite of their inseparable cares, chagrin, and afflictions, so charm, that they completely lose sight of their noble destination, and become indifferent about the endless joys of Heaven! And yet, so weak and blind are men, that we find at all times in their hearts, manifold instances of this indifference about Heaven, of this contempt for the invisible treasures of eternity. St. Gregory complains that

even in his time, "men covet so importunately sensual, perishable things, that they contemn and despise what is heavenly, eternal; that, instead of raising their eyes to the light of truth, of thinking of the country for which they have been created, they cast a longing glance at the earth which cannot satisfy them; they forget their home, and, in its stead, love the place of their exile, and rejoice in darkness as if they were walking in the clear light of day."

O man! how has thy faith become so weak that thou canst so easily forget the greatness, the sublimity of God's promises? Thou lovest so intensely this fleeting, temporal life! Ah! love also eternal, heavenly life. If thou art indifferent about Heaven, thou never shalt, thou never canst arrive at its possession; for it is a kingdom we must conquer; it is a treasure we must seek; it is a reward we must merit; it is a crown for which we must combat. Now where or who is he, who combats, exerts himself, strives after, or troubles himself about an object which he does not know, does not love, does not care for—about which he is utterly indifferent?

O! this was not the case in the first days of Christianity. Then, an astonishing desire, an incredible zeal to secure eternal life, filled the hearts of the faithful. The thought of Heaven was never absent from their minds Many lost their all that they might follow Jesus; others

distributed their possessions amongst the poor; all lived, after their Baptism, in innocence and justice. Their Faith was far dearer to them than life. For three hundred years the blood of martyrs flowed in streams over the earth. A glance towards the heavenly kingdom enabled them to sacrifice their lives with willingness in testimony of the truth of the Religion of Jesus When the executioners appointed to carry out the sentence of death pronounced against the young and beautiful St. Cecilia, manifested some sympathy for her, she courageously remarked: "To die for Christ is to exchange mire for gold; a hut for a palace, dust for a crown." Feeling the red hot coals which his tormentors had placed on his head, St. Agapitus exclaimed: "Of what use is it for you to burn my head? In Heaven it will be crowned with glory" St. Agatha, beautiful and tender, went to receive the death of a martyr, with as much joy as if she was going to a wedding. And who has not heard of the satisfaction with which the innocent, holy Agnes, only thirteen years old, offered her life to her heavenly spouse? Yes! the thought of Heaven, the wish to win it as heroically as possible, gave men the courage to despise all earthly advantages, aye, even to contemn the torments of the most cruel deaths. It gave the mother courage to behold with joy, her beloved children lay down their lives for their faith; it enabled the young man and the

young maiden to renounce all the attractions this life can offer, and to dedicate their hearts to the one true God! Alas! alas! what a change has come over our days! Because Faith half extinguished has become cold in our hearts, energy and the spirit of sacrifice for good have fled from our souls. A glance at the actual state of the world shows us evidently, that the great majority of men are either totally ignorant of Heaven, or have totally forgotten it, or that they live in complete indifference about it. Christianity, which once shone with such brilliancy in Asia and Africa, has now almost entirely disappeared from these continents. Most of their inhabitants know not what faith teaches about Heaven. They have not life in them; for they know not Thee, the true God, nor Him whom Thou hast sent, Jesus Christ. The case is similar with the Isles of the Pacific. How many million souls live there, completely enshrouded with darkness, in the dreadful night of spiritual death, and who know nothing of the kingdom Jesus has purchased for them at the enormous price of his blood!

The knowledge of the deplorable condition of nations living in such ignorance of their high destiny, produced in the noble soul of St. Francis Xavier, when, three hundred years ago, he went to preach the Gospel to the Japanese, such a desire to enlighten them, and to inspire them with a love of Heaven, that he exclaimed: "O that I

could go to Paris, and picture to the learned of the renowned University of that city, the lamentable state of these benighted people, and inflame their hearts with the determination to renounce their unprofitable studies, and come here to save immortal souls!"

In the other portions of the world, Christianity indeed still lives; but, alas! how disfigured, how debased! The majestic tree has seen many of its limbs lopped off; now lying around its base, they wither and die; for they are cut off from the principle which sustained their life! Having unfeelingly torn themselves away from the tender heart of their mother, these unnatural children now refuse to hear of the narrow and thorny way which alone leads to eternal life. Immersed in the comforts and sensual pleasure afforded by temporal goods, they permit their hearts and minds to be so engrossed with the present, as to be perfectly indifferent about what is to come after this life. "Give me forty years to reign over the kingdom," said a too famous Queen, "and I will renounce my right to Heaven." It seldom or never happens that men express themselves as clearly as Elizabeth did; yet their uncontrolled passions lead to a similar indifference about Heaven and for a much less weighty reason.

But in our own time, what infidel indifference, what contempt for the eternal and the heavenly, rules even amongst those who are in the bosom

of the Church established by Christ Himself, and who publicly profess to be children of the Gospel, disciples of Him whose kingdom is not of this world? Where shall we now find those who, according to St. Paul's description, "look," in preference to everything else, "for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ;"* who keeps in mind the eternal years, and whose guiding thought is the recompense of eternal life?

Alas! the great mass of Christians appear so insensible, so cold, so indifferent about Heaven, that they deserve the reproach the Holy Scripture makes to the Israelites: "And they set at nought the desirable land."† They are so addicted to the visible, sensuous things of the earth, that they are incapable of raising their eyes to Heaven. This Land of Promise where no sorrow, no tears can exist; this heavenly city where peace eternal reigns; this Palace with its gaiety unsurpassed; this happy day which no evening closes; this beaming light which no cloud obscures; the great and glorious kingdom of Jesus Christ in Heaven, seems to make no more impression on the generality of hearts, than if it were a mere fable! But what leads to a supreme degree of indifference and contempt for eternal life—is sin. Whoever tastes its poisoned cup, and allows his intellect to be intoxicated with pride, and his heart to

* Titus ii., 13. † Ps. 105, 24.

be swayed by the gratification of the senses, gradually forgets the spiritual, supersensible things which the just expect in the future life as rewards and recompenses. He lives exclusively for the present. He seeks in time for a happiness, for an end, which eternity alone can furnish. He will finally reach such a state of indifference about eternal felicity, that neither guilt, nor the shock of unforeseen and terrible accidents, nay! not even the fear of death, will be strong enough to terrify him, to induce him to mend his ways, or to revive in his heart a longing after the goods of Heaven. What a melancholy proof of this truth is afforded us by the many facts of the present century! In a certain country where the law declares valid, the so-called civil marriages, there lived a man—an *Instructor of youth*—in a union of this kind. True, according to civil law, it established certain rights and duties; but according to the principles of Faith, and before the tribunal of conscience, instead of being a marriage and a union carrying with it the blessing of a Sacrament, it was mere concubinage. Now in the good Catholic city, the children of which this man had been commissioned to instruct, his manner of life was looked upon as scandalous. The proposal to remove him from his office was brought up before the city council. In the course of the discussion which followed, one of the members of the council exclaimed: "What! remove him from his of-

fice ! On what ground, pray ? For doing what the law permits ! By no means. I am myself in exactly the same condition as this teacher ; and I should like to see one who would dare reproach me for doing what the law allows." Were not these two men indifferent about the kingdom of Heaven ?

Another man who, according to the principles of Faith, had little or no hope of reaching Heaven, found himself on the point of death. His Christian friends reminding him of the condition of his soul, received this terrible answer : "My father lived as I have lived ; and if his lot be hell, I claim no better home." Was not this man indifferent about Heaven's glory ?

A poor mother, unable in her extreme poverty to meet her own wants and those of her three little children, took the desperate resolution of casting her little helpless offspring into the Seine. Was she not indifferent about Heaven's riches ?

A young man, holding forbidden intercourse with a married lady, in a fit of vexation and passion, shot his guilty paramour through the heart, and then in despair, blew out his own brains. Did *he* care about Heaven ? If we run over the register of crime, whose principles and acts all the papers of our time daily lay before our eyes, can we avoid forming the judgment that the majority of men is indifferent about Heaven ?

O ! may we, who, whilst reading this little Book,

have our hearts occupied with the thought of Heaven, experience within ourselves how sweet and consoling is the belief in a happy eternity! Strengthened by the hope of Heaven, we shall be in a condition to bear with the painful vicissitudes of this mortal life. The contradictions and sufferings which no one can avoid, will fail to lead our hearts into error; for we shall remember that all will pass away; that even we ourselves shall disappear; that nothing lasts but eternity. We shall learn to know the worth of life, and to employ advantageously the time which has been given to us to merit a happy Eternity.

THE CALL TO HEAVEN.

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear,"* says the Lord. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love"†. What else are these consoling words than a call to Heaven? They are addressed, not to one individual alone, but to all the children of men. All men without distinction are God's creatures, have been formed after His likeness, and are His children, His property. And Thou art He, "O Lord who lovest souls!"‡ From this love springs the Will—so consoling to us all—to make all men, without a single excep-

* Matt. xiii., 9. † Jer. xxxi., 3. ‡ Wis. xi., 27.

tion, happy, eternally blessed; this will is our call to Heaven.

It is true, indeed, that by virtue of the liberty with which God has endowed us, we can determine our wills to good or evil; we can, by the practice of virtue, merit the happiness of Heaven; or, by wicked lives, deserve eternal pains; for each one will be judged according to his works, and there is no eternal middle place between Heaven and Hell. Purgatory is only a road to Heaven. On the use we shall make of this freedom, shall depend our lot for eternity. There is nothing more sure than that God, who created us without our co-operation, will not, with the single exception of Baptized children, save us without our co-operation. Our salvation must be our own work. Of this, however, we are sure; that, as far as God is concerned, we are all, without exception, called to eternal salvation—to reach it must be our own work. "God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth."* Not a single one should be lost. Whoever would deny this, would contradict the Holy Scriptures and the teaching of the Church, and would destroy the very foundations of all Christian hope. The salvation of one single, individual soul, is of such importance, that, as a Doctor of the Church says: The three adorable Persons of the most Holy Trinity are

* I. Tim. ii., 4.

occupied in effecting it; the Eternal Father by creation, the Son by Redemption, the Holy Ghost by sanctification. Yes, we find in the Holy Scriptures more than a hundred positive and clear proofs of the sincere will of God to make all men happy, to lead all to the knowledge of the truth. "It is not the will of your Father who is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."* This Will of the Heavenly Father is so earnest, so sincere, that to redeem the whole human family, fallen into the slavery of the devil, "He spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all."† "He so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting. For God sent not His son into the world, to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him."‡ The only begotten Son "humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,"§ in order by His blood, His sufferings, His cruel death, to save us from eternal death. "For there is one God, and one Mediator of God and men, the man Jesus Christ, who gave Himself a redemption for all."‖

Who then can doubt the truth of this fundamental doctrine, of this article of our Holy Faith: that inasmuch as it depends on Him, God has

* Matt. xviii., 14. † Rom. viii., 32. ‡ John iii., 16, 17.
§ Phil. ii., 8. ‖ I. Tim. ii., 5.

called and does call and will call to Heaven, to eternal Beatitude, all men of every time, of every race, of every nation? "We have indeed in our hands"—writes St. Augustine: "the death of Christ, the Blood of Christ. What a glorious pledge of our salvation! No one, then, can doubt of his salvation; no one can say: 'I shall not be saved.' God Himself has promised thee, O mortal man! that thou shalt for ever live with Him. Dost thou not believe that this will be as God has assured us? Oh believe it, believe it most undoubtedly. It will be as God has promised, if thou wilt. It depends on thee. God has already done infinitely more for us than He promised. What has He done? He died for thee. What has He promised? That thou shalt eternally live with Himself. Now it appears to me far more incredible that the eternal, immortal God should die, than that mortal man should live eternally. That the first has happened, we have the most incontrovertible certainty; shall we then be able to doubt of the second?" Thus far the great African Doctor.

But now if man, of his own free will, separates himself from God; if knowingly and designedly he lives in a state of sin, of enmity with God; is he even then seriously called to participate in Heaven's eternal joys? This is the answer: Whoever dies in sin, loses all right and hope to Heaven; for, after death, there is no change for

the long days of eternity. "In what place soever the tree shall fall, there shall it be."* But so long as man's soul is in his body, so long as man breathes, no matter how deeply immersed in sin he may be, it is always possible for him, by true repentance and change of heart, to bury his sorrowing brow in his heavenly Father's bosom, to be reconciled with his God, who ceases not to cry out to Him: "I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."† "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow."‡ Jesus has given us not only the parables of the repenting prodigal son kindly received and generously restored to his forfeited rights by an indulgent father; of the lost sheep so anxiously sought after, and tenderly cared for by the loving, good shepherd; of the groat found by the industrious housewife; of the hearty invitation to the great family festival; He has assured us in the most explicit terms, that "He is come to seek and to save that which was lost."§ Hence it is that He has given to His Representatives, the Priests of the New Law, the power to loose the bonds of sin, to remit and pardon the offences, however great, of all who are truly penitent; and this not once or twice, not seven times a day, but as often as it is necessary, or, as our Lord Himself says: seventy-seven times seven—: that is, as often as,

*Eccles. xi., 3. †Ezech. xxxiii., 11. ‡Is. i., 18. §Luke xix., 10.

with proper dispositions, the sinner applies for pardon.

In a certain country bordering on the limits of North Germany, there lived about forty or fifty years ago, a Priest, who, forgetting his holy state and sacred obligations, fell from one sin into another, and sank so deep into crime, that for very shame—not daring to meet his own citizens, he left his native land. Free from the restraint which the presence of well known faces exercised over his conduct, like the prodigal son in the far off land, he gave full scope to his unbridled passions. He soon fell away from the Faith, and went over to Protestantism, the receptacle of every Priest too bad to exercise his holy ministry in the Catholic Church. Nothwithstanding his wicked precedents, he was soon appointed to a Pastorship in the Protestant communion ; thus from a Preacher of truth, he became a disseminator of error. Years rolled by, and this poor unfortunate still remained in a state of enmity with his Lord and Maker. On a certain day he, together with the ministers of the surrounding country, was invited to dine at the house of a Preacher of a neighboring town. Whilst they were indulging in the joy and gaiety of the festive board, word was brought to the Rev. host, that not far off, there was at the point of death a poor man, who, though not asking for it, appeared to be very much in need of spiritual assistance.

For some reason or another—probably through a feeling of delicacy towards his guests whom he could not conveniently leave alone in his house—the Rev. host found it impossible to visit the dying man. He therefore requested one of his guests to go in his place. Our poor apostate Priest volunteered to attend to the call, and immediately started on his errand of mercy. The messenger led him to a poor miserable room where, stretched on a little straw, in the most abject poverty, he found an old man struggling with death, and uttering the most piercing shrieks of despair. The minister repeated to him a few words of the Holy Scriptures. The dying man heeding not the words, continued his own melancholy strain: "I am lost! I am lost! There is no pardon for me! Woe to me, I am damned!" The Minister endeavored to console him, to excite his confidence in God's mercy. "No! no!" he cried—"No one can help me! I cannot be saved! My sins are too great! Hell awaits me!" "But for God's sake, tell me what is the matter with you"—urged the Preacher. "What have you done? What sin troubles your conscience?" He received no other answer than the terrific shrieks of a despairing soul. Finally, yielding to the urgent request of the Minister, he said: "I will tell you why there is no salvation, no Heaven for me. I am—a fallen Catholic Priest; and all the sins connected with such a

fall ; and all my acts of resistance to the call, to the grace, to the mercy of God ; and all, and all—rise up before me. Oh ! my guilt is too great for me to find pardon. I am lost—no one can help me, *no one* can help me ! " This brief narration crushed the very heart of the Preacher, who saw in the poor man before him, as in a mirror, the state of his own soul, and the horrible death he must expect. The old Faith revived ; and conscious of the Divine Power which the Church of Jesus Christ has conferred on poor weak men called Priests, the apostate Priest said to the dying man : " Friend, Brother ! I can help you ! As true as God lives, I can help you ! For I am—a Catholic Priest—true alas ! like you, I am a fallen Priest ; but a Priest I am and shall for ever be. In danger of death, I have the power to absolve you from your sins, to open Heaven to you." It appeared to the dying old man as if an Angel from Heaven stood before him and offered him salvation. Overcome by the great mercy of God, who offers him in the very last hour of his life, pardon, reconciliation and forgiveness ; and who promises him Heaven and eternal life, he confesses his sins with all the bitterness of a perfectly contrite heart, receives absolution, and dies in the peace of the Lord. This triumph of God's love which wishes to save all men ; which, with all the tenderness of a mother, continues to seek the salvation of even

the most abandoned, the most degraded sinners, till they have drawn their very last breath of mortal life, so moved the apostate's heart, that by God's Almighty grace, he found himself a changed man; on the spot he resolved to return to the bosom of the Catholic Church. His conversion was complete. Returning to the yet assembled guests, he said: "Farewell, gentlemen; I am going back to the Holy Catholic Church which I so shamelessly abandoned. The Divine Mercy calls me to penance, to reconciliation, and, with God's grace, to Heaven."

PART III.

WAYS TO HEAVEN.

We can readily understand the state of a man's mind who, in some dense forest or in some open but unknown country, has lost his way, and who has on hand, an affair of such great importance, that it is of the utmost consequence for him to reach the end of his journey at a stated time. He sees various roads, paths and bye-ways; he knows not which to take—he knows not whether he shall take the road to the right or the one to the

left—Oh that he could find some one to direct him! How vexed we are inclined to feel with ourselves when to no purpose whatever, without even the advantage of seeing a new country, or of enjoying pleasant scenery, we have wandered several miles out of our way, and have had to travel over a long monotonous road! How painful it is for one who, desirous of seeing once more, of hearing the dying words of a kind father or of a dear mother, arrives just one moment too late on account of his having taken the wrong road! How vexatious it is for a man to feel, that by not knowing the shortest road, he has lost an opportunity of making an instantaneous and colossal fortune!

In our great and all-important journey towards eternity, where at an appointed, though to us unknown hour, we must arrive, and sooner, it may be, than we expect; where there is not only question of again seeing those dear ones who have gone before us, of securing a little profit, a trifling advantange; but where moreover we are to be blessed with the sight and love of God Himself and of all His saints; where we are to possess eternal, infinite happiness, how great must be our consolation, our joy and our contentment at the conviction, that we are on the right way which leads us infallibly to the term of our vocation, to the possession of eternal felicity! This is the happy lot of every faithful Christian.

We know the way to Heaven. We know with absolute certainty the road which leads directly to Heaven, that which leads away from it, and who are they who walk in these two ways.

The only begotten Son of the Eternal Father, descended from Heaven upon earth out of love for mankind, not only as a Redeemer to procure them eternal salvation, but also as a guide to point out to them the way to Heaven. We can confidently trust ourselves to His guidance. "This is my beloved Son" cries a voice from Heaven—"hear him."* Now what does Jesus tell us about the way? He expressly says to us: "I am the way, the truth and the life."† "For unto this are" we "called," not only that we should believe in Him, but "that we should follow His steps."‡ This St. Peter learned from the lips of Jesus Himself who said to him: "Follow me."§

The imitation of Jesus Christ is the way that infallibly leads to Heaven. Jesus is the model given us by God the Father for our imitation; we are to establish a resemblance between Him and ourselves by copying His actions into our own, by correcting the abuses both of our souls and our hearts, by regulating our lives, by walking in the way of peace. And in fact, is it not supremely becoming, that we, who call ourselves Christians, should conform our views and our actions to the Principles and Examples of Christ?

* Luke ix., 35. † John xiv., 6. ‡ I. Pet. ii, 21. § John xxi., 19.

Out of love for us the Lord has chosen us that we might walk in His own way, that we might be His chosen, His holy People. The Son of God has descended from Heaven to teach us how we can ascend to the abode of delights. "I am the way —I am the light of the world: he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life."* And since, at His Ascension into Heaven, He did not leave us orphans, but remained with us, and will remain with us all days till the end of the world, sustaining us by His grace and by His powerful assistance, it cannot be difficult to follow Him; the more so indeed that His Divine love for us, forcibly draws us to Him. "Come to me," He says, "all you that labor: and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke, and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet indeed and my burden light."† This invitation to come to Him gives us courage and joy; it infuses into our hearts a desire to drink of the same bitter cup of which He partook. Yes, as our Faith teaches, there is absolutely no other way whereby we can reach Heaven than the Imitation of Christ. No one, it matters not who or what he is, whose life does not bear some resemblance to that of Jesus Christ, can enter the kingdom of Heaven; for the degree of virtue or sanctity we possess is measured by our resemblance to our Divine

* John viii., 12. † Matt. xi., 26., 30.

Saviour. "No, man," He tells us Himself: "cometh to the Father but by me"*—that is by following Him in all our actions—since He is the way that leads to life. Our conduct must be like unto His; "for whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son."† An incident related in the Life of St. Francis Xavier, shows us how much a conviction of this kind helps to urge us to practice virtue, to imitate Jesus Christ. The Saint, whilst in India, had made great efforts, and given himself a deal of trouble to convert to a better life, a rich Portuguese, who, though believing in Jesus Christ, failed unfortunately to conform his life to His holy creed. The love of the joys and the pleasures which the world affords, had obtained complete mastery over this man's heart, and brought him down into a slough of sensual gratifications. He would not hear of amendment. Now, as Xavier, whom this man highly esteemed, was on the point of departing to evangelize other regions, he called on his unhappy friend to bid him farewell. When leaving, the saint took his hand, and said to him: "As a remembrance, I give you a good counsel, which, I trust, you will not forget—it is this: frequently repeat to yourself these three words—*Jesus and I.*" Some time after, the Portuguese accepted an invitation to dine with a very wealthy acquaintance. Here

* John xiv., 6. † Rom. vii., 29.

I may state for the information of some of my readers, that in those days of Faith, Christians, even the rich and the noble, were not ashamed to keep in some conspicuous part of their dining halls, the image of their God and Saviour. How different is the case now! In our days, such a Christian custom would be contrary to the *bon ton*—it is fit only for poor ignorant Catholics!—It would be down-right fanaticism, according to worldly notions for the rich to give a place in their halls to the image of Him who freed them from slavery, who shed His blood, and sacrificed His life for them, and who will come again in power and majesty to judge the living and the dead. In the days of St. Francis Xavier people were of quite a different opinion; and in the hall where our Portuguese and his friends were assembled, there hung against the wall a magnificent image of our Lord on the cross. It was directly in front of his seat; so that almost the first object on which his eyes fell, was the crucifix. The sight vividly recalled to his mind the words left to him as a remembrance by the saint: "Jesus and I!" he thought to himself. "Alas! my God!" said he in the depth of his heart—"what an infinite difference between Jesus and me! Jesus poor, and I rich! Jesus in pain, and I in pleasure! Jesus on the cross, and I at a richly furnished table! Jesus died for me, and I do not live for Him! Jesus thinks of me, and I forget

Him! Jesus from the cross goes into Heaven, and I ——." His feelings overpowered him. A flood of distressing thoughts rushed in upon his mind—his voice became earnest and sad—little in keeping with the joy of the festive board. He thought of Heaven and hell; he acknowledged to himself that the kind of life he was living, was very different from that which Jesus pointed out to us as the only one which leads to eternal felicity. Yielding immediately to this inviting call of grace, his heart was converted to God even before he arose from the table, and ever afterwards, his life, though in accordance with his condition in society, was that of a true and fervent Christian Following our Lord by imitating His virtues as perfectly as the weakness of poor human nature would permit, he reached, as we confidently hope, the possessiou of eternal felicity. How true is it then, that no other way than this, leads to the kingdom of Heaven!

Now all men are not called on to imitate Christ in the same way. St. Paul says: "Let every man abide in the same calling in which he was called."* The following of Christ is indeed for all —nevertheless each one has to follow Him in his own peculiar way—one in this manner, the other in that.

St. Bernard and St. Bonaventure say there are four means of getting to Heaven. Some seize it

* I. Cor. vii., 20.

by force, others purchase it, others again steal it, and finally others are, as it were, forced into Heaven. Heaven is forcibly taken possession of by those who renounce all they have, and follow Jesus ; it is bought by those who, out of love for Jesus, distribute their earthly goods amongst the poor, and thus lay up for themselves treasures in Heaven ; it is stolen by those who perform their good works in secret, unknown to all but Him from whom nothing is concealed ; those who, in Christian patience, bear trials of poverty, afflictions, tribulations and sufferings of body and soul, are said to be forced into Heaven by a merciful Providence.

In order to indicate more precisely the different Heavenward routes included in the following of Christ, we shall point out as many ways to Heaven, as there are entrances to the immortal City of God.

THE ASSUMPTION INTO HEAVEN.

This is the way whereby baptized children, who depart this life before coming to the use of reason, enter the kingdom of glory. Without any act of their own, they are taken to the bosom of God. Born children of wrath, though guilty of no personal sin, without Christ and His Re-

demption they could never hope to reach the joys of eternity, and the beatific vision of God. The sin of Adam, which they have inherited, excluded even the new-born babes from the abode of God's happiness. But having in holy Baptism put on Christ, having entered the sanctuary of the Church and acquired a right to be heirs of God and co-heirs of Jesus Christ, those little ones, clothed in the immaculate robes of baptismal innocence, which it was never in their power to stain, pass through the portals of death from temporal to eternal life. They are—as we say—taken up to Heaven. Oh happy way! Rejoice ye mothers who have experienced that nameless grief of holding in your arms, and of pressing to your hearts the lifeless form of a dear babe, that you brought forth in pain, and loved with all the ardor of a mother's love! When the first sensation, so natural and so noble, of sorrow and grief is passed, rejoice in your inmost soul! That babe is in full possession of God's beatitude, it has been taken to Heaven! it is happy, eternally, infinitely happy, it prays for its mother, and lovingly awaits the day it can welcome her to the mansions of eternal delights.

THE COMMON ROAD TO HEAVEN.

On this road is found the great mass of or-

dinary Christians; for Almighty God requires nothing unusual, nothing extraordinary from men in order that they be deserving of eternal glory. Yet this is not the broad road whose end is death; those who do evil can in no wise be said to walk in the way of the Lord. From those who, as true and not merely apparent Christians, have entered on the way of the Imitation of Christ, God does not require great fasts and penances and other austerities as a condition for bestowing on them the inheritance of salvation; it suffices that with the profession of the true faith they observe those divine and ecclesiastical commandments which bind under pain of mortal sin. Though they should commit venial sins; though their love and zeal for God should be greatly diminished, but yet sufficient to enable them to fulfill their necessary Christian obligations, and to avoid all mortal sins, they can entertain the tranquilizing, firm confidence, that they are in the right way. If they persevere unto the end in God's grace, even in this tepid manner, they are sure to reach the kingdom of Glory. It may be, as St. Paul says, they may suffer loss, but they shall themselves be saved by the fires of Purgatory.* After enduring those piercing but purifying fires during, perhaps, long and painful years, they will be found worthy to enter that wonderful abode of the Elect, of that "multitude

* I. Cor. iii., 15.

which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues: standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."*

THE CIRCUITOUS ROUTE TO HEAVEN.

The natural union between man and woman has been ennobled by our Redeemer, who has elevated it to a means of salvation, of happiness for eternal life. Marriage "is a great sacrament; I speak in Christ and in the Church."† "Let every one of you in particular love his wife as himself and let the wife fear her husband,"‡ because the husband is the head of the wife; as Christ is the head of the Church. Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be to their husbands in all things." "Husbands"§ continues the holy Apostle—"Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it."¶ What a noble picture! what a high calling! In what a different light the Gospel represents marriage to us now from what it was before the coming of the Saviour! Yet it cannot be denied, as the same Apostle in two Epistles assures us, that in this way, it is much more difficult than in any other

* Apoc. vii., 9. † Eph. v., 32. ‡ Ibid. v., 33. § Ibid. v., 23, 24. ¶ Eph. v., 25.

for a heart to give itself to God. If by the death of one of the parties, Almighty God dissolves the union which no earthly power can loose, and the surviving party uses the freedom thus acquired, not to enter into a second marriage but remaining true to the first choice, to dedicate to God's service and to the attaining a higher degree of perfection, the years of singleness thus providentially regained—this person will reach the happiness of Heaven by what I call a Circuitous Route. This way is illumined by brilliant rays of stars of the first magnitude. St. Monica, St. Frances de Chantal, St. Elizabeth, St. Hedwigis—have reached Heaven by this way.

THE THORNY WAY TO HEAVEN.

St. Gregory says that "Whoever has indulged in forbidden pleasures, should abstain from those that are allowed.—Whoever has lived in sin, must die in penance." Or, as our Lord says: "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish."* For those then, who, through levity or wickedness, have left the path of innocence and virtue, there remains no other way whereby they can reach Heaven than the Thorny Way of penance. O thrice happy they who, after having

* Luke xiii., 3.

wandered far from God, listen at length to the sweet voice that never ceased to recall them to the Lord's embrace! Happy they who have obeyed this inviting voice, and in acknowledgment of their guilt have had recourse to the mercy of the Lord! In them will be fulfilled the words of the Almighty to the Prophet Ezechiel —"If that wicked man restore the pledge and render what he had robbed, and walk in the commandments of life, and do no unjust thing: he shall surely live and shall not die."* "I am he that blot out thy iniquities . . . and I will not remember thy sins."† "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back."‡ "He will cast all our sins into the bottom of the sea."§ He who has fled from the paternal roof, must retrace his steps if he wishes to return to his father's house. This is the way of penance, the *Thorny Way* which is so painful to sensual nature, but which procures for the heart a heavenly joy. "The penitential man" says St. Augustine from his own experience: "is ever full of sorrow; but this sorrow is an abundant spring of joy to himself and others. All the gratifications of the world are not so sweet as the tears of his sorrow." For these are tears of love, tears of gratitude, tears of sweet hope that by this *Thorny Way* he shall reach the possession of the highest Good.

* Ezech. xxxiii., 15. † Isai. xliii., 25. ‡ Ibid. xxxviii., 17. § Mich. vii., 19.

THE THIEF'S WAY.

A number of audacious thieves wish to secure a treasure preserved in a strong castle perched on the summit of a high and threatening cliff. It were madness to think of entering by the ordinary way; after mature deliberation, they determine on trying to reach the top of the crag, some very dark, stormy night, by a steep and almost impassible bye-path, and carry off the treasure from the castle. It is an enterprise of the most unheard of danger. The narrow foot path along the steep wall of towering rock, to which no man who values his life, would dare trust himself, leads by the brink of the most terrific abyss. The least false step, (and how easily it may be made in such a place, in so dark a night!) will cast the unfortunate wretch into the depths of the dark abyss beneath! Certain and terrible death is the inevitable consequence of a slip. Nearly all who ventured to pass over this appalling way, really fell to the bottom, and were never heard of more! If any succeeded in safely reaching the castle, they were exceptional cases. Would it not be tremendous rashness for any one to ascend this path, even though he should succeed in obtaining possession of the treasure?

Thus it is with those who relying on a death-bed repentance, defer till the last moment, the

all-important work of changing their lives. They are like the daring thief who, to obtain possession of the treasure concealed in a strong castle built on craggy cliffs, exposes himself to an almost certain and a most dreadful death. The danger is frightful, the abyss bottomless. A false step were death infallibly—nay ! eternal death ; thousands have already been precipitated into this fathomless depth. Here and there one succeeds in safely passing through the danger and enters Heaven by the Thief's Road. Though so very dangerous, conversion at the uncertain moment of death has indeed led numbers into eternal bliss. Yet what St. Augustine says of the good Thief who was converted at the last moment of his life, is most true : " One is converted that we may never despair ; and but one, that we may never presume."

THE NARROW BRIDGE OF VIRGINITY.

The way whereby Virgins reach the kingdom of Glory, is both narrow and difficult. It is like the narrow plank connecting the opposite edges of a yawning chasm, in whose vast depth below sweeps a roaring torrent. Having, however, been placed there by earnest, sincere love, it offers a secure, protecting passage to all who en-

trust themselves to it. When danger threatens, they can confidently lay hold of it ; and the lamp of Faith kept brightly burning by incessant watchfulness, instantaneously dissipates the darkness with which doubt, tribulation or temptation may, at times, invest this dangerous path. The Way of Virginity leads directly to God's own heart. St. Paul writes : " He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife ; and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and the Virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord : that she may be holy both in body and spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband."* Although Virginity is a counsel, not a command, it has been embraced by millions since the establishment of Christianity. The love of Jesus having once taken hold of a heart, exercises over it a far greater power and influence, than any earthly love, no matter how intense or passionate, can ever do. The certain hope, by means of the narrow bridge of humble virginity, of safely passing over the yawning gulfs and threatening precipices which beset our way, into the innermost recesses of Heaven's joys and sanctity, sweetens every sacrifice of life, be it ever so painful. It power-

* I. Cor. vii., 32-34.

fully, almost irresistibly attracts the human heart to give joyfully, not only what is commanded, but even what is merely counseled. This enables us to understand what, to the eyes of flesh and blood, appears unintelligible; how it is that such multitudes of young men and maidens in the Catholic Church of all ages, in our own days as well as eighteen hundred years ago, have preferred to serve God in the unmarried state, have discarded all earthly love, and by most solemn vows have consecrated to the love of Jesus their hearts, their lives, their all.

THE WAY OF HONOR.

Men governed by a worldly spirit, form extraordinary, truly astonishing ideas of what constitutes honor. If one deems his honor injured, or an insult offered him by a trifling word of a friend, a rival or an open enemy, he challenges this friend, this rival or this enemy to single combat, to a bloody duel, he sends a bullet or thrusts a sword through his heart, and in the human gore thus profusely, wantonly, and uselessly spilt, in the human life thus ruthlessly sacrificed, in the eternal damnation of a soul created to live eternally with God, he sees his honor restored, and the insult washed away! On account of a little punctilio of honor, considered according to

the erroneous views of men devoted to the world, and forgetful of Heaven, he heedlessly exposes himself to be condemned to eternal disgrace and infamy in presence of the universe by God Himself, the eternal king of honor and glory. No! no! we must not look for a just conception of honor in the estimation of men. True honor consists in faithfully serving God, the eternal king whom no appearance can deceive, whose judgment no cunning artifice can warp, whose insight into the true and precise state of every case no power can prevent, whose decisions are irrevocable and even by His enemies acknowledged to be most just. Even though the whole earth should combine to despise him who in truth seeks this honor, God will glorify him in Heaven. This is the way followed by the confessors of the Faith who, as St. Paul says, were not ashamed of the Gospel. They knew in whom they believed, and therefore they joyfully confessed before the whole world that Jesus was their King, that the Gospel was their rule of life, and that the Church was their mother. Every Christian man and woman must walk in this way; for Christ says: "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the son of man also confess before the Angels of God. But he that shall deny Me before men, shall be denied before the Angels of God."*

* Luke xii., 9.

Those then, who here on earth, without shame, by word and deed, confess the Lord whom they serve; those who deserve the name of true and loyal Catholic Christians, though they should be insulted, contemned and despised by the world, and be in the midst of poverty and misery, truly walk towards Heaven in the way of honor. The natural law, which is written in the hearts of men, aye! even the commands of God, can be observed by a noble, honorable pagan, by an infidel or by a heretic. Not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to calumniate, etc., etc., are virtues belonging to the natural as well as supernatural order; they are virtues, which, not only Almighty God, but society requires to be practised. But together with the Law of God, to observe the commandments of the Church, to be true to her even in the smallest points of discipline (if anything she directs us to do, can be considered small), is the part of the Catholic Christian. The Catholic alone, out of a spirit of Faith, with love and child-like simplicity, observes all the commands and directions of the Church out of reverence for Christ, who says: "He who will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."* This Mother with solicitude, authority and kindness, thus addresses those whom she has brought forth in the Lord: "Children, to-day you shall abstain from a certain

* Matt. xviii., 17.

kind of food ; on Sundays, all who are able to go, must be present at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass ; at Easter you shall all assemble around the common family table, the Table of the Lord." And the obedient children respectfully and lovingly answer : "Yes, dear, kindest of Mothers ! It will be as thou wilt, and where thou wilt in all cases whether of great or of little importance, out of reverence, attachment and love to thee." This kind of language, this open profession of obedience to Christ's Church, distinguishes Catholics from all other classes of men. As descendants of old Catholic families, as persons who have made sacrifices for the true faith, we must not hesitate to place our honor in a free, open, public manifestation of our being faithful and legitimate children of God's Church. In this public declaration, notwithstanding the obloquy of the world, which it may draw upon us, consists our journeying in the *Way of Honor*. Should a prince place with his own hand the star, or the cross of honor on the noble breast of a hero of many battles, or on that of a faithful servant of the State, can we suppose that the recipients of such honors would be ashamed to exhibit to the public gaze these unusual marks of distinction ? Would they conceal these honorable emblems ? Far from it ! They would gladly court the opportunity of exhibiting to the admiration of men the star, or the cross their own merit, their long and tried fidelity,

their indomitable and successful courage had won from the tardy generosity of the impartial prince. Child-like obedience, unshaken fidelity to the Church is the noble mark, the brilliant star of Christians. This star of fidelity and obedience beams from the hearts of all true followers of Christ—it is peculiar to the Catholic—it is the mark of honor which distinguishes him from all those who are not of God's Church. And shall I be ashamed of this? Should I not rather rejoice and feel proud that I walk in this way of honor? Yes, even the unbelieving world cannot refuse its esteem to men of character and sound principles. Is not this fidelity to the Church a pledge of eternal life, of one day possessing the Heavenly kingdom?

A certain man of noble standing, but a Christian only in name, had intrusted the instruction and education of his little son to an institution conducted by a body of pious Priests. During vacation, which the boy, according to custom, was spending at home, there occurred a fast day, on which, to his great astonishment he saw meat on the table. On being offered a piece by his father, he gratefully thanked him, but firmly declined to accept. The father insisted. "No, father, I cannot; there is on the table an abundance of other dishes from which I can make a very pleasant and hearty meal." On the father's wishing to know the reason, the boy replied: "To-

day is a fast day; it would be a mortal sin for me to eat meat. The professor told us that a law of the Church, when it can be observed, is as binding as a law directly from God Himself. Now the Church forbids us to eat meat to-day—if it is not necessary; surely it is not necessary for me—I will make my dinner of the other things on the table." "No, sir," said the father, in a severe and angry tone. "No, sir; if you do not eat meat, you must not eat anything—leave the table—go into the next room." The tender heart of his mother, who was a silent spectator of what had just past, was grieved and rejoiced. She rejoiced to see her child so faithful to the Christian instruction he had received; she was grieved to see him punished by the father for such noble fidelity to the commands of Christ's Church. That her dear child might not suffer from hunger, she secretly brought him something to eat. "No, no, my dear, kind mother, I cannot," answered the child. "Father has forbidden me to eat to-day. I could not obey him when he told me to eat meat, because I would not offend God by a grievous sin; but when he tells me to eat nothing, I can obey—I am only too happy to show him my obedience in any and everything God does not forbid. Your love for me must not make you insist. I must and shall obey my father's command." Through eager love for her husband and child, the mother hastened to inform the stern

and almost infidel father of this little incident; both were moved to tears. The father ordered the child into his presence, gave him full permission to eat what he wished, and, acknowledging his own fault, promised his wife and child that never again should anything forbidden by the Church appear on his table. When, at the end of vacation, the father brought his boy back to College, he said to the President: "I am not the same man who took this boy home in the beginning of vacation. I was then an unbelieving infidel—my boy has brought me back to Faith, and to the practice of virtue."

THE WAY OF ZEAL.

In this *Way* walked the apostles and disciples; and all priests and confessors of the Gospel must follow their example. Nay! all those Christians, men and women, who by their conviction and virtue bear testimony to the truth, and let their light shine before men, are in a certain sense preachers of the Gospel, laborers in the Lord's vineyard, and co-laborers in the great work of Redemption, in the sanctification of souls bought by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

THE WAY OF BLOOD.

All that is remarkable in the history of St. Symphorosa and her seven sons, is related by the Holy Scripture, in a most enthusiastic description of another mother, who also had seven sons. All were required to be untrue to their religion, to be unfaithful to the law of God; but all, with one accord, declared their readiness rather to die, than to prove faithless to their religion and their sacred laws. The heroic mother beheld six of her sons die in the midst of the most cruel torments. It is the turn of the seventh, the last, the youngest, the dearest to the mother's heart. The cruel tyrant thought a mother's tenderness could not resist this trial. Imagining he had successfully worked on her maternal feelings, he required her to address a few words of persuasion to the child, who thus far had contemptuously rejected the most tempting offers, and declared his fixed determination to follow the example of his brothers, who had all preferred to die rather than to betray the Faith of their fathers. In view of the most terrific torments now prepared for her dear little, her only child, the mother obeys the command of the tyrant, to address a few words to him who is her only solicitude. She approaches this cherished object of her love. Ah! unhappy mother! beware what words thou

addressest to this dear little one. If thy advice be to renounce his faith, thou mayest probably save him from temporal death, but thou deliverest him up to death eternal! Ah! let us be not concerned about her! This noble woman has true manly courage—she has heroism in her heart. Hear her words to her little son, who is enduring incredible torments: "I beseech thee, my son, look upon Heaven and earth, and all that is in them; so thou shalt not fear this tormentor."* Look up to Heaven, thou wilt not tremble at the torments and pains thou art to be made to endure. Think of Heaven and thou wilt be able to persevere in thy attachment to the law of the Lord, thou wilt despise the torments inflicted by the enemies of God and man, thou wilt conquer death, thou wilt secure eternal life. Consider the Heavens! persevere! thy torments will last but a short time, thy joys will be eternal; in Heaven we shall all meet again. The mother beheld this child's blood flow copiously, she beheld him die a more cruel death than the rest; for we are told, "the king being incensed with anger, raged against him more cruelly than against all the rest."† The Holy Scriptures add of this heroic mother: "Now the mother was to be admired above measure, and worthy to be remembered by good men, who beheld her seven sons slain in the space of one day, and bore it with a

* II. Mach. vii., 28, 29. † Ibid., vii., 39.

good courage, for the hope that she had in God. And she bravely exhorted every one of them in her own language, being filled with wisdom; and joining a man's heart to a woman's thought."* "And last of all, after the sons, the mother also was consumed."† This Way to Heaven is called the Way of Blood, and millions of people, children, virgins, men in the full vigor of life, and men tottering under the weight of years, have walked therein. An eternal happiness cannot be considered too dearly purchased, at any price.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS.

Jesus walked in the Way of the Cross. Whoever therefore, wishes to be His disciple, must daily take up His cross and follow Him. To carry the cross is extremely painful to nature ; it would indeed be intolerable were we not blessed with the conviction that the *Way of the Cross* is the surest, the shortest, the easiest, the most direct to the kingdom of Heaven. This thought consoles the afflictions, sweetens the bitterness, and lessens the oppressive weight of the Cross. The heavenward way which Jesus has pointed out to us, must be the shortest and the safest ; for He Himself says : "I am the Way, the Truth

* II. Mach. 20, 21. † Ibid. 41.

and the Life."* "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?"† "For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?"‡ Besides God has always led by this way, His Elect, His dearest, His truest friends, to the summit of eternal glory. All the beloved of God in the old and new Laws, not even excepting Mary, the Queen of Heaven, were tried and proved by many tribulations. Since, as sinners, before we can enter the kingdom of God, we must in some manner suffer the punishment due to our sins, is it not evidently preferable, is it not easier and far less painful, to atone for them by patiently carrying a cross, heavy though it be, that has been placed on our shoulders by the paternal hands of God Himself, than to do penance for them in the fire of Purgatory? "Yes," says St. Pacian, "it is far easier, far more agreeable to cleanse our souls in the waters of tribulation and penance, than in the fire of Purgatory." The way of the cross is also the shortest route towards the grand object we have in view. The venerable Balthasar Alvarez, of the Society of Jesus, calls it, in his own peculiar style: "The post-route to heaven;" and "sadness and afflictions are the swift post-horses," or as St. Augustine expresses it: "Afflictions in this life are fast-sailing yachts; they are straight stairs,

* John xiv., 6. † Luke xxiv., 26. ‡ Ib. xxiii., 31.

steep ladders whereby one reaches directly to Heaven." Hence it is, that enlightened Christians look upon sufferings and the cross which they have to bear, as so many graces, so many mercies which God, out of a spirit of love and compassion, daily sends them that they may always have at hand the means of resembling His Son, and thus walking in His footsteps, may reach the paradise of the Elect. Entertain, then, O Christian! a high esteem for the cross. Never allow an occasion of acquiring merit for eternity, by patience in suffering, to escape you.

In a certain convent of fervent Religious, there lived two virgins—one still young, the other advanced in years—united by the strictest bonds of sisterly love and affection. The younger sister had been a pupil and later a Novice under the older Religious, and hence she loved and honored her as her spiritual mother. In course of time this mistress of Novices was relieved of her charge of superioress, and received from her successor the office of Infirmarian to the community.

Finding this new charge a little too laborious for her age and broken constitution, this good sister in a moment of forgetfulness, allowed a few words of complaint about the fatigues and labors of her office to escape her, in the presence of the younger Religious, who expressed her readiness to assume with joy the charge her

friend found it so painful to fulfil. A few days later the younger sister dreamed she saw Jesus laden with a heavy cross, enter the convent, and walk after the old sister who precipitately fled from Him, and that thereupon she herself hastened to relieve the suffering Lord from His cross. Contrary to all expectation, the superioress, who had known nothing of the complaints of the older or of the offers of the younger sister, changed the offices of both; the younger thus became Infirmarian, and heiress to all the trials and hardships her friend found it so difficult to support. When, some time after, the ex-mistress of Novices heard of the dream of her young friend, she readily understood the application; which of these was the happier?

THE STEEP WAY TO HEAVEN.

"The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."* He who out of love for God, overcomes himself, who remains ever master of his passions, who, supported by God's grace, heroically subdues his own nature, walks in the steep *Way to Heaven.* Heroic acts are great strides upwards; they are the steep path to sanctity, to salvation. One single act of this

* Matt. xi., 12.

kind suffices to elevate one to a high degree of virtue. Our Holy Father Ignatius says: "A single heroical act is worth more than a thousand common exercises of virtue." Now we all have innumerable occasions, even in the smallest things, to perform heroic acts of virtue. What is heroism? I shall answer the question with a historical fact. The renowned King of Sweden, Charles XII, was, in his youth, passionately fond of wine, and at times gave way to this passion to such a degree as to be completely intoxicated. On one occasion, whilst in this debased condition, he used harsh and offensive words towards his mother. Next day, one of his friends—rare example of candor towards a king!—reminded him of his outrageous behavior of the previous day; adding that his conduct must have been extremely painful and mortifying to the good queen his mother. Charles quietly listened to his friend, and after having, with earnest, deep emotion, reflected on the affair, he said in a severe, determined tone to one of his servants: "Bring me a bottle of the best wine and a glass." He was obeyed. With the bottle in one hand and the glass in the other, he presents himself before his royal mother and says to her: "Madam, yesterday I grievously offended you, and wounded your tenderest feelings." Hereupon he fills his glass to the brim and quaffed the whole at a draught, in the presence of the bewildered mother, and continued:

"This is the last cup of wine I shall ever taste." And he kept his word. Was not this heroism?

A young, doating mother, beheld her first born, her only babe, whom she loved dearer than life, sick and about to die. Wishing to move God to spare her all that she valued on earth, and to restore her child to health, she thought of offering Him a sacrifice dear to herself, and acceptable to Him. "Spare me my babe," she exclaims to the Lord, "and out of gratitude I shall never, not even once, kiss my lovely child." Was not this heroism?

Whilst yet a rich lady in the world, St. Frances de Chantal received a sick man into her house. His disease was so disgusting, the stench so intolerable, that her servants refused to attend him. Seeing this, the Baroness herself took charge of the poor, sick and afflicted man; and during the several months he still lived, she continued to bestow upon him her tenderest care, and finally saw him die in her own arms. Was not this heroism?

A poor widow besought the holy Bishop, St. Paulinus, to pay the ransom of her only son, and free him from the slavery he was enduring amongst the infidels. Having distributed the last of his possessions amongst the poor, Paulinus found himself unable to give the poor woman the sum she asked. Still he could not bear to send the widow away without doing what he could for the liberation of her son. He offered himself in

exchange for the youth, who was restored to his afflicted mother. Was not that heroism?

THE FLIGHT OF LOVE.

"Love," says St. Augustine: "and do what you like." Nothing can resist true, holy, divine love. Faith passes away; hope disappears; love alone remains. He who understands the great art of loving God above all, with his whole heart, his whole soul, with all his strength, as Magdalen, Teresa, Catherine, Agnes, as an Ignatius, an Augustine, and thousands of others have done, raises himself above everything earthly, and aided by the wings of love, directs his course to God. "O Holy Love, inflame my heart! Were I to know that there was a drop of blood in my veins, that there was still a fibre in my heart not penetrated with the love of God, I would not suffer it in me, I would expel the blood from my veins, I would tear the fibre from my heart." Thus sighed the love inflamed Magdalen of Pazzi and the love-glowing Francis of Sales.

THE GUIDE TO HEAVEN.

A ship approaches the coast. The entrance to the harbor is dangerous in the extreme. The

Captain is totally ignorant of the safe but narrow channel; on all sides he sees reefs and threatening sand-bars. All day he has, in vain, carried at his mast head, the signal "for a Pilot." Advancing night and multiplying dangers greatly alarm him for the safety of his men and that of his vessel. Hope has almost fled from the stout hearts of that noble ship. The hardy seamen begin to lament their unhappy lot, that, after having successfully led their magnificent vessel through terrific storms, over a trackless ocean, they must now perish within reach of land. O! tell who can, the joy that would fill their hearts were an unlooked for, oft-tried and experienced Pilot to present himself, and offer to bring all safely into port. Hope, assurance and joy unbounded, would expel the fears and anxious doubts which were crushing their almost despairing minds. Thus it is with Christians, who, like weak vessels in dangerous waters, have to struggle against the menacing perils of the stormy floods of this world.

Like Tobias, when the Archangel Raphael, under the form of a stranger, offered himself to be his guide in the long journey he was about to make, we should, aye! with far greater reason, rejoice that our Faith points out to us in a well-known form, a leader to whom we can with the utmost security abandon ourselves. This chosen, authorized, venerated and faithful guide to eternal life

—is the Catholic Church. She, and she alone, has been chosen by the Lord to lead all men, like wandering sheep, to a rich pasture; to gather them all into the sheepfold of eternal life, that there may be one shepherd, one flock, and one fold. She is the city built upon a mountain which every eye can behold; she is the light placed in the candlestick, that, during the night of this life, she may enlighten our steps. To her supreme Head, St. Peter, God gave the commission: "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep."* The Church, the holy spouse of Jesus, has the great commission to make all men happy, to conduct them to Heaven. And certainly it is the greatest, the most living expression of the love of Jesus for man, that He has not left us orphans, but that He has appointed and made over to us as a guide in our pilgrimage of this life to our eternal home, His dear Spouse for whose existence He gave His very heart's blood, whom He sanctified with all His graces, whom He enriched with all His treasures. Who can require a stronger proof that our Saviour is most earnest in His desire to make us all, without exception, happy, than that He has given us a guide, that represents the fulness of His power? For He said to His Apostles, the princes of the Church: "He who hears you, hears Me, and he who despises you, despises Me."† And of him who will not hear the Church

* John xxi., 17. † Luke x., 16.

He says: "Let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."* And that our confidence in this guide to Heaven may be unlimited, and that we may submit unconditionally to its authority, Faith informs us happy Christians that it is infallible. Notwithstanding the best will possible, human wisdom may deceive, human judgment may err. But the Church of God is infallible, it cannot err in matters of Faith; it is not the work of men. She is built upon a rock, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against her,"† "she is the pillar and ground of the truth."‡ Christ the Son of God has founded her, she lives by His spirit, He has entrusted His doctrine to her, the Holy Ghost governs her and teaches her all truth. God will never abandon her. "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."§ Whoever therefore, entrusts himself to her guidance, cannot err; whoever follows her word and her doctrine most infallibly reaches the end of his creation; he obeys the call and follows the lead of God Himself who, like a brilliant luminary in the night of this life, shines in our path, as the column of fire led the people of Israel through the desert to the promised land. Who then would not trust this heavenly leader? Like a child that confidingly buries itself in its mother's bosom, and thinks itself never safer than

* Matt. xviii., 17. † Ibid. xvi., 18. ‡ I. Tim. iii., 15.
§ Matt. xxviii., 20.

in her arms, so the Christian, with childlike love, adheres most confidingly to his spiritual mother the Church. He is so firmly attached to her that no power on earth can tear him from her heart to which he is united by the powerful chains of unalterable love and affection. He loves her because she is beautiful, because she is holy, because she is most amiable ; and she loves him because he is a son, a redeemed child of her heavenly bridegroom, a citizen of His kingdom, an heir of paradise. This love of the Church is the living reflection of the love which Jesus has for us all. Like Jesus, the Church makes no exception of persons ; the rich and the poor, the great and the small, the learned and the ignorant, all men of every nation, of every age, of every race are her children : nay ! even those who are outside her pale, and those who have separated themselves from her, and who are evilly disposed towards her, are all objects of the tender, though sorrowful love of the Church. She calls them all to her heart, and with arms and voice raised to Heaven, she implores for them grace, mercy and conversion Like her spouse she desires to see all men happy. She makes it a part of her office, expressly on Good Friday, to entreat, through the merits of Jesus Christ, graces and blessings for all schismatics, heretics, Jews, pagans, in short, for all men. How great is this love ! Oh how we rejoice to be children of this

noble and loving mother! How unutterably dear to us is the name we bear! Holy Church! Thou spouse of the Saviour, mother of the children of God, mistress of truth, dispensatrix of graces, treasurer of the mercies of God, never shall we forget thee! Our right hand would be sooner forgotten, our tongues would sooner cleave to our jaws than we should forget thy love and fidelity! Yes! true even unto death! To strengthen, to console, to encourage us at the moment of our death, is the last office of this guide to Heaven. At our very first entrance into the world the Church extends to us her arms and leads us into her sanctuary. She then takes care to nourish us with the milk of doctrine, and when we are grown up, she arms us for the approaching combat. She confirms us with the sacred oil of strength. She gives us the helm of salvation, the cuirass of justice, the shield of Faith, the sword of the word, the honorable insignia of knights of Christ. Should any one be wounded in the dreadful battle, she heals the wounds seventy times seven times, by the blood of Christ. By the bread of life which she distributes to us as often as we hunger, by the chalice of salvation which she offers us as often as we thirst, she sustains our strength, she infuses into us new life. Should any one, finding the weight of his pilgrimage too heavy for himself, wish to share it with another creature, she leads the young man

and young maiden before the altar, and enobles and sanctifies their union. Should any one wish to devote himself exclusively to the service of the Lord, and fight his combats, she arms him with the plenitude of her authority, and a miraculous power. When death approaches, she anoints and strengthens us for the last combat, and though in that last moment all else should desert us, she will not abandon us. When the end of this struggle between life and death is drawing near, and the eyes have grown dim, and the sounds of death render hearing difficult, she kneels by our dying bed, calls on Heaven to come to our aid, and with all her power and love, she asks new and great graces, bestows her favors, lavishes for the benefit of the dying, her inexhaustible spiritual treasures. "Forget, O Lord!" she says: "the sins of the youth of this dying person, rejoice his soul with the sight of Thy face, open the portals of Heaven to him. Regard not the wanderings into which, during his life, passion and evil desires have violently driven him. He has indeed sinned, but—(thus this loving mother storms as it were, the heart of God for her dying child)—he has indeed sinned, but he has not denied the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost; he has believed, he has shown zeal for God's honor, and has persevered to the end in this faith and zeal. Be therefore merciful and take this my dear child to Thyself, to eternal beatitude."

See brothers, friends, what a chosen, what an infallible, what an amiable and what a true guide we have to the very door of Heaven. To God, therefore, be eternal thanks and praise!

PART IV.

The Bolts and Keys of Heaven.

THE BOLTS TO THE GATES OF HEAVEN.

Opening the Holy Scriptures we read: "For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who enter by it. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way which leadeth to life: and few there are who find it!"* "Strive to enter by the narrow gate: for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able."† "Many" (that is to say all)—"are called but few are chosen."‡ These words show most clearly that all men shall not be saved. Only eight persons, Noah and his family, were saved from the waters of the deluge. Amongst all the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha, large cities, not ten just

* Matt. vii., 13, 14. † Luke xiii., 24. ‡ Matt. xx., 16.

persons could be found. Of the entire people of Israel, numbering six hundred thousand fighting men, besides the women and children, whom Moses led out of Egypt, only two, Josue and Caleb, entered the promised land. Of the immense army that Pharaoh sent across the red sea in pursuit of the Israelites, not one escaped with his life—all were buried beneath the waters. Even in our own day, the road of crime and impiety is broader and more frequented, than the way of virtue and sanctity. But now, since every one, no matter what the tenor of his life may have been, no matter how wicked, how criminal his conduct, is very willing, at the end of his days, to enter the kingdom of Heaven; in other words, since no one willingly goes to hell, it may be worth while to meditate on what can hinder us, what can bar Heaven's Gates against us.

THE FIRST BOLT OF HEAVEN'S GATES—WANT OF FAITH.

"He that believeth not shall be condemned."* Such are the terrible words which Jesus, otherwise our mild, indulgent Saviour, has uttered for our warning. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away."†

Want of Faith, of true belief, is the first, the

*Mark xvi., 16. †Matt. xxiv., 35.

especial, the principal obstacle to one's entering heaven. Whoever does not believe in the one Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the creator of all things, who sustains and governs all things, who will reward the good and punish the wicked; whoever does not believe in Jesus Christ, God's and Mary's Son who, by His sufferings and death, has redeemed the world, who shall come again to judge the living and the dead; whoever, by Baptism, has not become a child of his earthly kingdom, the only true Church, the Church He Himself established; whoever does not believe all that the Church, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, proposes to our belief, shall find, at his soul's leaving his body, the gates of Heaven eternally barred against him. There have been drawn across them bolts which no human power, no angel, no demon can remove.

THE SECOND BOLT—MORTAL SIN.

But what, we may ask, can prevent a believing Christian from entering through Heaven's gates? God has bestowed on man a favor of incalculable value—He has gifted him with free will. As a noble poet says: "Man is free though born in chains." As a consequence of this freedom, it follows that, as long as life lasts, we have it in our power to change our ways. He who walks

in the narrow way, can, when he lists, turn back, leave this narrow way and follow the broad road. Yes, hundreds and thousands of times has it happened that men, after having for years walked in the paths of innocence and virtue, turned away from God, and fell into the deep abyss of sin; and it is equally true, on the other hand, that after having led for years, lives of wickedness; after having walked in the way of destruction, men have, through God's mercy, without which we can do nothing for eternal life, been brought back into the true way, and have devoted to virtue and the love of God, the last days of their temporal existence. As long as He is a wanderer on earth, whilst He is in the way of trials, man has the power freely to determine his will for good or evil; it is this that constitutes his guilt or merit in God's sight. The moment he has reached the term for which he exists, the moment he has entered through the gate of death, the unchangeable kingdom of eternity, he ceases to be a wanderer; his time of trial is over; the moment to receive the recompense of his labor has arrived. Whatever may be the state of a man's soul, when he draws his last breath, when his heart has beaten for the last time, the same will be his condition for all eternity. "In what place soever the tree shall fall, there shall it be."* From this principle of Faith, it follows

* Eccle xi., 3.

that, if a man, at the moment of death, has in his heart an unconfessed, an unpardoned, unatoned for mortal sin, he is eternally separated from God, as his supreme good. And, as happens to all those who die in God's enmity, he is cast away as a reprobate by the unerring judgment of the Lord of the living and the dead. The reason is, that, although mortal sin did not destroy his faith, it banished God and His love from the soul, it robbed it of sanctifying grace. A man, who, whilst bearing in his heart the undying venomous serpent of mortal sin, enters into eternity where it is not possible, again, to recover God's friendship, will find Heaven's gates so firmly and so strongly barred, that no human power, no angel, no demon can open them. This bolt was, for the first time, drawn across the entrance to Heaven, after original sin; and it would have eternally remained so, even against the most innocent of Adam's children, had not our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ removed it, and thus reopened Heaven to the human family. We all have it now in our power, by the abuse of our liberty, to close the gates of Paradise against ourselves. Nay, more! our merciful God, who knows our weakness, and whose exceeding great desire is to share His infinite happiness with us all, has left us the means of unbolting the doors of Heaven as often as we find that, by a misuse of the Divine gift of liberty, we have fastened them.

But, at the same time we know, that whoever neglects, whilst the time is allowed him, to wash away his fault in the blood of the Lamb, to return to virtue, to be reconciled to Him who, with infinite patience and love, has awaited the return of His prodigal child, who is seventy times seven times a day ready and anxious to press to His heart him who sincerely returns to Him, has every reason to fear a terrible sentence. If a free man, after having, by an act of his own will, refused to profit by the time given him, dies in a state of mortal sin, and clothed in the rags of iniquity, appears before the judgment seat of God, he will find the gates of Heaven bolted against him for all eternity; and let him knock as long and as loud as he can—they shall never be opened to him. Let him cry out "Lord, Lord!" as loud and as long as he can, he shall ever receive the one terrible answer: "I know you not" If God does not recognize him as His child, as an heir of Heaven's kingdom, what, pray, will be the portion of the poor sinner for eternity? Eternal torments, eternal pains, hell from which there is no redemption! Forever cut off from God and happiness, condemned to the eternal dungeons where no love is found, where no one can or will love God who had created all for such infinite joys, who had done so much to save all from the endless sorrows which those excluded from Heaven endure! A very distinguished man,

formerly a successful poet, who, in the latter years of his life recognizing the true faith, had the courage to embrace it by openly returning to the bosom of the Church in which he performed the office of a zealous Priest, and from which his ancestors had fallen away, decribes the condition of lost souls in the following words :

LITERAL TRANSLATION.

"A drop of water to my parched lips!"
"For countless ages, thirst has tortured them."
Thus prays the soul, for ever doomed to woe ;
While echo murmurs : "ever tortured be."

"A drop of solace to my troubled soul,"
"Which justly doomed, must ever feel the pang"
"Of cold embrace from my putrescent heart!"
But no!—Salvation's hour, for ever's past.

"But," cries aloud the angered cherub strong,
"Love God, and leap from hell to Heaven's heights."
The damned soul then plunges deep in hell ;
For, "Love!" no, no! it will not, never can.

THE THIRD BOLT—VENIAL SIN.

Only the two obstacles to salvation, which we have mentioned, namely, a want of faith and final impenitence, exclude us from Heaven *eternally*. There is, however, a third obstacle, and unfortunately, of very frequent occurrence, which excludes for a *time*.

Venial Sin is an obstacle to our entering Heaven. Its nature is not to produce such an enmity between the soul and God, as to expel God from the heart; yet it is an offense against God. It angers the Father, offends the Son and saddens the Holy Ghost. It does not entirely rob us of the love of God, yet it chills it in our hearts; it does not absolutely separate God from us, yet it partly removes Him; it is not a flight from the parental roof, yet it is a separation from the parental heart; though it does not destroy, it greatly diminishes our heavenly inheritance. It is not a loss of the rights of a child of God, but it is a coldness on the part of the bride. Venial sin does not indeed kill, but it sickens, it weakens the soul. Next to mortal sin, it is the greatest evil that can befall us. It does not deprive us of the assurance of securing Heaven, but it postpones our possession of it. As nothing defiled can enter God's Paradise, it follows, that this stain must be effaced before Heaven's portals can be opened to us. If we neglect to purify our souls in this life, we shall have to do so in Purgatory's glowing fires which shall burn us till, like gold in the crucible, we are freed from every defect, and cleansed from every stain; then we shall see the bolt removed, the gates of Paradise thrown open, and ourselves admitted into eternal repose.

THE FOURTH BOLT—ABUSE OF GOD'S GRACES.

The ill use made of graces, and infidelity to the calls of God, even though we should die in His friendship, also retard our entrance into eternal beatitude. Grace is the means we must employ if we wish to attain salvation. Without God's grace, we are powerless for eternal life, but uniting with it our freedom, we are able to resist every thing that is not God; we can do all things. This sacred aid has been purchased for us by the blood and death of Jesus; it is the beginning, the continuation, and the completion of our merit; it is a seed which is to grow up into eternal glory. According to the measure of our correspondence with Divine grace in this life, we shall receive our degree of beatitude in Heaven. If therefore a man sets little value on grace, if he throws away this precious gift of God, if by a perversion of his free will he turns it to a bad use, and fails to profit by the Divine love and generosity; he shall have to give a strict, a rigorous account of his improvident conduct; and he cannot enter eternal life until he has paid the last farthing, until he has, in the flames of Purgatory, fully satisfied the just demands of God. "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment."*

* St. Matt. xii., 36.

A similar misfortune befalls him who heartlessly rejects the kind, sweet interior words of the love of God, suggested by the Holy Ghost, and who has proved untrue to the call of God, to his vocation. It is evidently a mark of His special love, if the thrice Holy God vouchsafes to speak to your heart, to call you to perform a good action, to practice higher virtues, that you may enjoy greater happiness. Now if you, with cold indifference, refuse to listen to His loving invitation, and unfeelingly decline to grant what He asks of you for your own advantage, for your own happiness, you will have to answer for this infidelity, for this indifference towards His exceeding great love. The *Bolt* thus drawn across Heaven's gates, cannot be removed till you have amply atoned in Purgatory for your ungrateful conduct.

THE FIFTH BOLT—THE OLD DEBT.

This hindrance to our entrance into Paradise is our *old debt*. By sincere repentance, men obtain here on earth the remission of the eternal punishment due to their sins. Not unfrequently too it happens that, when the sorrow is truly great, when the contrition is perfect, the Almighty remits with the eternal, the temporal punishment due to our transgressions, as St. Magdalen and St. Dismas had the happiness to experience. The

generality of Christians have, either in this life or in the next, to undergo some temporal punishment for their sins. For, although their hearts have been purified, by the Sacrament of Penance, from all mortal sin, they were not thoroughly penetrated with the love of God at the moment of reconciliation. The many sins we committed in our youth, or later in life, and the little penance, which we have performed, the little satisfaction that we have given to Almighty God, constitute, what I call, our old *debt*, which we must cancel, before Heaven's Portals can be opened to us. That there may be no delay about this important matter, let every one, man and woman, young and old, hasten to gain the indulgences which the Church offers to all, in order that they may meet this debt. Collections of various prayers and exercises, to which indulgences, plenary and partial are attached, are to be found in many little books, published for the faithful. The "Racolta" is perhaps the most complete. Persons could select those exercises for which they have the most devotion, those practices most conformable to their state of life, from which they hope to derive the greatest profit. If we are zealous to draw on this spiritual treasury left by a merciful God at our disposal, we shall soon be in a position to pay our *old debt*, and see this bolt also removed from the doors of Heaven.

The Keys of Heaven.

"And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven,"* said Christ to St. Peter. He is then the porter of that blessed city into which we hope one day to enter. But he will not open to any others than to those who in this life will have co-operated with God's grace, and employed the means unto salvation, the Lord has entrusted to His Church. We thus see that the keys, to a certain extent, are in our own hands. We wish, at present, to devote a few moment's reflection to this subject.

FIRST KEY—THE BLOOD OF JESUS.

The Blood of Jesus is the first, the most important key of Heaven. "The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin,"† writes St. John; and because the application of this precious means of salvation takes place especially in the Sacrament of Penance, the Christian who wishes to open Heaven for himself, will worthily receive this Holy Sacrament as often as possible. We must not confine ourselves to going to confession, simply when we feel in our souls the weight of a mortal sin, but we should frequently" go with confidence to the throne of grace,"‡ where the Lord

* Matt. xvi., 19. † I. John i., 7 ‡ Heb. iv., 16.

receives with infinite mercy all who have fallen: We should go monthly, weekly, as often as our love for God urges us to wash our souls in the Blood of Jesus. For in each worthy reception of holy absolution, the entire riches of redemption are bestowed upon us. Absolution not only destroys our sins, but multiplies each time sanctifying graces in our souls, and consequently the corresponding degree of glory and happiness, the very lowest grade of which is infinitely preferable to all the treasures and crowns of the world. St. Magdalen of Pazzi being rapt in spirit, saw the Blood of Jesus dropping from his wounds on the sisters whilst in the confessional, purifying their hearts and filling them with the most abundant graces. Inflamed with a holy desire for the blood of redemption, this loving Virgin exclaimed: "Let me share in it too, O Lord! let me share in it too!"

The blood of salvation is also distributed to us in the great, infinitely valuable Sacrifice of the Holy Mass; and whoever offers this sacrifice or partakes of it, is like one standing at the foot of the cross on Mount Calvary, praising, thanking, beseeching, propitiating the mercy of the Father. O Christian! lay thy heart in spirit with the host on the Patena, be thou too a sacrifice to the Most High, let thy soul be steeped in the Blood of Jesus in the chalice, and thou shalt most certainly become rich in graces!

The worthy reception of the Holy Eucharist unites us still more closely with this Divine Blood. By means of this most wonderful mystery of love, Jesus will build, in each one of us, a tabernacle in which He will corporally dwell, whenever and as often as we wish. He will unite His flesh and blood with our flesh and blood; He wishes that His flesh and blood should be our food and drink, our nourishment as our daily bread is. He wishes that, in a certain sense, His blood should become our blood and His flesh become our flesh, as St. Cyprian says.* St. Bonaventure exclaims: "Thou wilt, O Lord! change us into Thyself, Thou wilt transform us into Thyself, Thou will convert us into Thyself, Thou wilt lay Thy heart on our hearts, and fill us with love for Thee, so that inebriated with Thy love we shall with Thee form but one soul, one life."† Thrice happy they who live and die thus united with Jesus! This key of the blood of Jesus will most assuredly, open to them the eternal gates of Heaven. But woe to those, who know not, who love not, who enjoy not, this angelical food! They have not life in them; they shall not attain to the possession of God, for the God of Heaven is the God of the living, not of the dead.

Finally, meditation on the sufferings of Jesus is an exercise which infallibly leads us to a great

* Concorporei et consanguinei facti.

† Et sic tuo inebriati amore tecum unam animam habeamus.

love of God, and to a strict union with Him ; to a participation in the price of redemption, to Heaven. Be witnesses to the truth of what I say, ye holy souls scattered throughout the world, who find no sweeter, no more consoling thought than that of what Jesus has offered and suffered out of love for us ! He who has offered to the Heavenly Father, a hundred, a thousand times, the Blood of Jesus for his own sins and for the sins of the entire world, affords each time an infinite joy to the thrice Holy God, who looks with eternal pleasure on the redeeming work of His much beloved Son. And if our hearts grieve for some dear friend who, unfortunately forgets or neglects to secure for himself this all-powerful key to Heaven, the Blood of Jesus, we can ourselves daily wash in this saving blood those poor souls so dear to us, so heedless about their own interests, and on account of the blood of the "Lamb who takes away the sins of the world,"* God will be merciful unto all.

THE SECOND KEY—PRAYER.

Another key to Heaven, which, so to speak, opens with absolute certainty, is *Prayer*. The power of Prayer, that sigh which elevates us to

* John vi., 29.

God, and moves His compassion for our necessities, is innate within us; so that in obedience to natural, religious feeling, springing from our miseries, and necessities, we raise our eyes and hands to Heaven. By the testimony furnished us by our own souls which, as Tertullian says, are naturally Christian, we recognize God's Being and Omnipotence. The exercise of prayer is, moreover, absolutely necessary for the salvation of our souls. "Without Prayer," writes St. Chrysostom: "Man is like a city without fortifications, without arms, ready to fall at the first attack." With Prayer, the soul is a strong fortress which no enemy, no matter how powerful or determined, can subdue. St. Alphonsus Liguori says: "He who prays shall be saved; he who does not pray shall be lost." "No sinner who does not pray, can hope to be converted by ordinary means," says St. Thomas. After conversion, one will not persevere in the practice of virtue without a special, actual grace, which God is not obliged to give, and which, in fact, he seldom gives to any others than to those who ask for it. The Council of Trent teaches that final perseverance is to be obtained through Prayer. It is not, however our intention here to prove the necessity of Prayer; we wish simply to show that it is a key whereby we can open Heaven to ourselves.

We ask a rich man for a little alms; it depends entirely on him whether or not he will favorably

hear our request ; we cannot require it of him in the name of justice. But should this rich man formally bind himself to grant us alms, whenever we ask them, we are certain our petition will be heard. Precisely the same relation exists between God and us, who, as St. Austin says, are before God, poor, miserable beggars. Of Himself God is not bound favorably to hear our prayers. He has given the express assurance that He will grant whatever we ask, and consequently He cannot reject our supplications. This solemn promise not to refuse, but to grant all we ask, we find in innumerable places of the Holy Scriptures. "Ask and it shall be given you : seek and you shall find : knock and it shall be opened to you."* "Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name"† therefore you have received nothing. "You ask and receive not : because you ask amiss."‡ "Pray without ceasing"§—with confidence, without doubting. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."‖ "Whatsoever we shall ask, according to His will, he heareth us."¶ "Amen, amen, I say to you : if you ask the Father anything, in my name, he will give it you."** Are not these expressions sufficiently clear? Should any one wish for more or stronger promises, confirmed, as it were, with an oath that God will give us, without exception, every-

* Luke xi., 9. † John xvi., 24 ‡ James iv., 3. § I. Thess. v., 17.
‖ James i., 6. ¶ I. John v., 14. ** John xvi., 23.

thing that tends to His honor and our salvation, he need but open, I might say, any page of the Gospel. Whoever doubts the value and efficacy of this promise, should try it, and beg a grace of Almighty God; and if, after having asked it with a pure heart, with a pure intention, with confidence and perseverance, he obtains nothing, he may then deny the truth of the generous promises of our Saviour. "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away."* Prayer then is that powerful weapon wherewith we can win Heaven for ourselves and others.

During a Mission, given about thirty years ago, in a certain parish in France, the Missionary devoted every evening, after his last Sermon, exclusively to the confession of men, who presented themselves in great numbers at the holy tribunal of penance. One evening the confessor, who attached great importance to the exact observance of his directions, that this time should be exclusively for men, saw, with no little annoyance, a girl of twelve or thirteen, force herself through the crowd of men, recollectedly awaiting their turn for confession. On reaching the confessional, she said in a loud tone: "Father, I am not come for the purpose of going to confession, I can go during the day; something of greater importance brings me here to-night. My

*Matt. xxiv., 35.

unfortunate father is furious against the Mission ; and as he is unable to prevent its good effects, he gives vent to his anger in the most outrageous invectives against all who take part in it ; yet he has more need of change of life than any one else in the Parish ; for he is in a very bad state before God. My poor mother and myself are greatly afraid his soul will be lost ; I therefore come to know what we must do." The Missionary, filled with admiration at the zeal of a child for her father's soul, kindly said to her : "My dear child, you can bring him back yourself. Do you not know what great assurance Jesus has given us about the efficacy of prayer ? If, with a pure heart and with perseverance, you have recourse to God, in the name of Jesus, for so important a matter as the salvation of your poor father's soul, you shall most certainly be heard. With confidence, ask of God this great favor; remind Him of His promise ; ardently and with unlimited reliance, entreat Heaven to grant your Father's conversion ; Jesus has given His word, He is bound to keep it. God the Father cannot do otherwise than hear you. You must obtain your request." Some days after, the child returned and, with a breaking heart, said to the Missionary : "All is in vain ; my father has become more embittered than ever ; he gave expression to the most violent manifestations of anger and hatred against the Mission, when in-

vited by some friends to hear one of the sermons." Assuming a serious air, the priest, with apparent severity, said to the child: "This is your fault. Had you, confiding in the promises of Jesus, prayed with fervor, as I recommended to you, your father would now be a changed man. Go and pray again, but better, more confidently and more earnestly than before." Greatly troubled, and moved to tears by this reproach, the girl threw herself on her knees before the Altar of the Blessed Mother of God, and with all the earnestness of her soul, besought God to hear her prayer. Two days after, the child returned again to the Missionary, but it was to announce the conversion of her poor father. "My father," she hurriedly exclaimed, "is converted. He went to one of the sermons in which the preacher treated of the mercy and goodness of God; his heart was instantly so moved that he delayed not to change his sentiments, and to be reconciled to his creator." Had we been always impressed with the great power of prayer, how many favors should we not have already obtained from God for ourselves and others? How different it would be in our communities, both civil and religious, and in our families, from what it is, if the civil or religious superiors, if fathers of families, were persons of prayer! Many a prodigal son, many an erring daughter, would have already been led back to the right way, if

the mother had been like unto St. Monica, who, during eighteen years, ceased not to beseech God to vouchsafe to open Heaven to her beloved, her only son, Augustine! O how many souls would have long since subdued their evil passions, how many communities would have already reached a higher degree of perfection if their leaders, their superiors, had been men of prayer! "For the prayer of the just," as St. Augustine says: "pierces the clouds; it is the key of Heaven, and opens to us its most hidden treasure."

THE THIRD KEY—THE PRACTICE OF GOOD WORKS.

The third key of Heaven is the *Practice of good Works*. Each good work procures us one degree of glory in Heaven. A Lay Brother who for many years had been tailor and wardrobe keeper in a religious community, being at the point of death, requested to have the needle with which he had worked, laid in the coffin with him. "See this needle," said he to those around his bed: "little as it is, it has been for me a key of Paradise, for I never failed to offer to God and his greater glory every stitch I made with it." But of all good works that open Heaven, the work of

love is the principal one. Whoever devotes himself to the good work of charity, out of pure motives, and according to the principles of faith, may be sure to receive from God the grace so to live and die, as to find the gates of Heaven open to him. "For," as St. Thomas says: "Mercy renders man in an especial manner like unto God; because God's mercy is above all His works; and the example has been given us that we should be merciful even as our heavenly Father is merciful." The resemblance of the soul to God is in proportion to the perfection with which she practises virtue; hence, the more perfect a soul is, the more like is she unto God. "For this reason," says St Chrysostom: "the heavenly door-keepers will immediately admit into the mansions of God those who, on earth, have shown mercy to the poor; they know the value of this work, for they know God." And indeed, if as Christians, we reflect that every poor creature, whose spiritual or temporal misery claims our compassion, is a friend, a brother, an image of Jesus Christ; if we bear in mind how incomparably great is the reward which religion promises to him whose heart is moved at the sight of those suffering want, and how terrible the punishment with which it threatens those who are insensible to the misery of the unfortunate, we can readily understand that alms-giving, as a summary of all good works, is of the very highest im-

portance for us, is capable of making us happy for time and eternity. Yes, nothing promotes, with greater certainty, even our temporal well-being, than the work of love, alms-deeds. One whose wisdom and sanctity we cannot doubt, was wont to say: "Give, and it shall be given unto you."* These are, as it were, two inseparable sisters; where one is, there must the other be: if one leaves, the other will not remain. "Give and it shall be given unto you." And indeed experience has established the fact admitted centuries and centuries ago, that: "He that giveth to the poor shall not want."† Whoever generously shares with the poor the stores God has given him, will have an abundance for himself. The Holy Bishop John, the alms-giver, who distributed amongst the poor all he possessed, and who nevertheless, enjoyed a constant stream of this world's riches, exclaimed, with all the warmth of a heart inflamed with love: "O My God! we shall see who will stop the first, Thou to give such an abundance of temporal goods, or I to distribute them amongst the poor!" Whoever then shows himself generous towards the poor, shall find the bread he is distributing, multiply in his hands; Divine Providence is ready to perform miracles in favor of those who will not shut their hands or their doors against the poor. Whoever, says the Prophet, pours out his riches

* Luke vi., 38. † Prov. xxviii., 27.

into the bosom of the poor, shall always possess abundance, there will always be as much returning as he gives away ; he will be like a well out of which we can ever dip, and which never runs dry. Away ! however, with such low earthly motives, unworthy of a Christian's momentary consideration ! To look for temporal rewards for serving God, is to labor for nought. Though all the wealth now in the possession of men scattered over the face of the globe, and all the treasures concealed in the bowels of the earth, should be given us in return for scanty alms, bestowed upon a needy fellow creature, it should never suffice to determine us to act generously towards the poor children of God. The spiritual advantages, the spiritual rewards, the eternal and unchangeable recompenses should be the great, the only incentives to our zeal for performing works of charity ; no other motive will suffice to procure us this powerful key of Heaven. God rewards only what is done for Himself. If our motive is to gain the esteem of men, to have the name of being generous to the poor, to increase our worldly possessions, we cannot complain if we receive nothing else. When persons who have had such motives for their charity, appear before their creator, they cannot claim a reward from Him ; or if they do, they must expect the answer : " Why should I reward what was not done for Me ? You have done it for the esteem of

men, look to the esteem of men for your reward." The Holy Scriptures, if not in so many words, at least in sense say, that: "Alms-giving is, as it were, a veil which covers our sins; it is a voice which ascends up to Heaven, even unto the throne of the Most High, whom it moves to bestow upon us His richest blessings. Break thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and the homeless into thy house, and the morning light will, shine upon thee, and justice will advance before thee. If thou seest the naked, clothe them, and hide thy alms in the bosom of the poor and their voice will cry out to Heaven for thee; thy good work will be a spring of supernatural graces, it will enable thee to discover the snares set for thee, by the enemy of thy salvation; it will procure thee strength and vigor to combat, and in the combat to be victorious. As water extinguishes fire, so do alms extinguish our sins. Alms are a powerful dyke against which the violence of our passions vainly dashes, which protects us against the strong current of impiety, that is making incessant efforts to bury us beneath its destroying waters. Alms-giving, in a certain sense, closes the gates of hell, and protects the beneficent against the abode of eternal darkness. It will, at the moment of death, fill our souls with unbounded confidence; it will enable us to appear with assurance, before the throne of God; it propitiates the judge of the

living and the dead ; it will throw wide open the gates of Heaven, and prepare for us the throne of glory and immortality."* There shall be, on the contrary, a judgment without mercy pronounced on him who shall have neglected to show mercy ; he who gives not alms will be troubled in spirit ; at the hour of his death, the devil will stand at his right hand, and threaten him with an unfavorable sentence, and an eternal damnation.† The words of the Gospel are very explicit for this opinion—more clear perhaps than the texts referred to. What a powerful impulse, then, faith is, to acts of beneficence and charity, to the practice of works of mercy ! Thou alone, O holy religion ! promisest such rewards to these acts, and utterest such threats against those who do not perform them ! Thou alone impressest on the brow of the miserable, those traits which fill us with a desire, with an enthusiastic wish to treat with such love the meanest, the poorest of men, with love such as though he were our dear Redeemer, Jesus Christ Himself !

There is in the life of St. Francis Xavier, a trait which illustrates this doctrine of our faith in all its truth. The Saint, on a certain occasion, went to the house of an intimate acquaintance, a rich Portuguese merchant, living then in India, and asked him for a sum of money as a dowry for a poor young woman. The merchant, being at

* Eccle. iii., Tobias iv., Ps. xl. ‡ Ps. cviii.

that moment engaged in some amusement which he did not wish to interrupt, answered the request of the Saint with: "O! let me alone! I am busy now, I cannot go to get it for you." But, mindful of the words of our Lord: "Ask and you shall receive, knock and it shall be opened to you," Xavier ceased not to urge his prayer. Finally, a little impatient at the persistency of the holy man, the Portuguese said: "There is the key of my chest—take what you want." The merchant, who missed nothing from his treasure, meeting, some time after, St. Francis, enquired of him how much he had taken—"Five hundred gold crowns" replied the saint. "Oh! why did you not take more?" asked his friend. "I assure you, when I gave you the key, I was fully determined had I gone myself, to offer you half of all the money I possess." The holy Apostle, hereupon, praised his charitable intention, his generous disposition to the poor, and prophesied that he would live many years, that he would be blessed in all his temporal undertakings, and finally that in order to prepare himself well for eternity, he would have three days notice of his death. All the prophecies were fulfilled to the letter. Having reached a happy old age, having been most successful in all his enterprises, and highly esteemed by all, the Portuguese, on a certain occasion, seated at his table, remarked that the wine he was drinking was bitter. He

called for another kind, and even a third, but, all the wines had the same bitter taste. "Now, now," said he to those at table with him, "it is time for me to prepare for death. Father Francis told me that three days after the wine tasted bitter to me, I should enter eternal life."

PART V.

The Gates of Heaven.

Two men from Poland, Father Lancicius and Father Druzbicki, remarkable for the sanctity of their lives, and for their distinguished writings, happened to be at the same time in Rome. People found it strange that these men, so eminent for their humility, piety and learning, should be so very different in their characters. One seemed the opposite of the other. Amongst other distinguishing traits, they perceived in one an extraordinary spirit of penance, a great severity towards himself; in the other, an effort simply to sanctify the ordinary actions of life, without any sign of unusual mortification, and with a cheerfulness bordering on levity. These

men, of such different characters, had, it was said, entered the eternal city by different gates —the fact was, however, they had entered.

Thus, too, it makes little difference how, by what gate, we enter the kingdom of Heaven. The great concern is, or ought to be, to enter through some gate, the eternal City of God. From this, the question would naturally suggest itself: Are the Gates of Heaven many, and if so, what are they? The answer to this, would enable us to judge from the state of our souls, and from the virtues which we practice, by which gate we may reasonably hope to enter the Heavenly Jerusalem. Properly speaking, the Gates of Heaven are nothing else than signs of election, assurances of our eternal salvation. Although, indeed, no one can, in this life, be absolutely certain of his salvation, for the Holy Scripture says: "No man knows whether he be worthy of love or hatred,"* yet it will be a great source of consolation to see in ourselves certain signs of election. A knowledge of Heaven's gates will powerfully urge us to strive to acquire those virtues to which God especially calls us, and in the practice of which, as through an open door, we find the surest and easiest entrance into Heaven.

In the description of the heavenly Jerusalem, of which we shall farther on have to speak, St.

* Eccle. ix., 1.

John says the City of God has twelve gates—three towards the East, three towards the West, three towards the North and three towards the South. And as in a fortified city, sentries are placed at the various entrances to refuse admittance to all but friends and allies, so twelve Angels keep guard at the twelve gates to exclude all who do not belong to the kingdom of God, and to the great family of Heaven. Once the gate is closed, the sentinel challenges each one who applies for admission, and refuses entrance to all who cannot give the countersign. Thus too, in order to enter Heaven, a certain countersign is required—and a proof that we are the loyal subjects of Heaven, and the lawful heirs of Paradise, will be demanded of us by the sentinels of the heavenly gates. He who does not know the word, who cannot give the proof, will be repelled as a stranger, as an enemy, by the watchmen of the celestial towers. This countersign, this powerful word so necessary to us all, is the Holy Name of *Jesus*. Yes, Jesus alone have we to thank, that Heaven is to-day open to us. Through Him alone, can we hope to enter the kingdom of Beatitude—for He Himself says: "I am the door. By me if any man enter he shall be saved."* Having laid this down as a rule of faith, the application of which to the principal condition of entering eternal life is evident, let

* John x., 9.

us now briefly meditate on the signs of election which the twelve gates of Heaven indicate.

THE GATE OF FAITH.

Over the first portal I see written in golden characters: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved."* Faith, then, is the first Gate through which we enter into Heaven; for "without faith, it is impossible to please God."† God, through Jesus Christ, has given us the light of Faith, that most precious, that most excellent of gifts. Grace through Faith, which is a gift of God, has saved us from certain destruction, has justified us; it has led us out of the shades and utter darkness of death, into the admirable light of God's children. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith."‡ This tribute of our understanding is the first indispensible condition of our salvation. We must believe, out of respect for God's infallible word and supreme perfections, every article He proposes to our faith, all the principles of our religion without exception. We cannot do, as according to St. Augustine, the Manicheans did; that is, believe what pleases us, and reject what displeases us. We must, on the contrary, submit our views in everything to the judgment of that Church which Jesus Christ estab-

* Mark xvi., 16. † Hebr. xi., 6. ‡ I. John v., 4.

lished, and which the Holy Ghost governs; we must honor and love her as our guide and mother; even when arrived at manhood, and with our minds stored with knowledge, we must, like the child whose history is recorded in the acts of the Martyrs, be ready to say: We believe in Jesus Christ, the true Son of God because mother says so, and God told mother; and she would not lead her child wilfully into error.—Oh yes! whatever the Church, as a Mother, proposes to my belief, I accept, I hold as most true; and like many who have gone before me, I am ready to shed my heart's blood in testimony of the sincerity of my Faith. O holy Faith! thou art my assurance that I shall not be lost.

The holy Martyr, St. Peter of Verona, while yet a child, was asked by one of his relations who had fallen away from the Faith, what he was learning in school? The little boy, with great simplicity, answered: "I am learning the Creed, the Catholic Profession of Faith." Grown up to be a man, he became a Priest, joined a religious order, was distinguished for his eloquence, and died a glorious martyr. Whilst his murderers were stabbing him to death on account of his Faith, he continued to recite, in as loud a voice as he could, the creed he had learned when young—"I believe in God the Father Almighty, etc., etc." And when the stabs received in the neck, deprived him of the use of speech, he dip-

ped his finger in the blood flowing from his wounds and wrote on the ground the word "credo," I believe.

THE GATE OF POVERTY.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit."* This is the inscription on the second Gate to Heaven. From the moment that Jesus, out of love to us, renounced His riches and became poor, so poor indeed that He could say of Himself: "the foxes have holes, the birds of the air nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."† From the moment He freely consented to be born in poverty, to live in poverty, and die in the most frightful poverty, love has given poverty an unspeakable value. St. Augustine says on this subject: "What a happiness it is for Christians that poverty can procure them the kingdom of Heaven!" For He who says: "Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be My disciple,"‡ also says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of Heaven." Every one then who wishes to be saved, must at least in spirit renounce all he possesses; he must be poor in spirit, whether rich or poor in the things of this life. Thrice happy

* Matt. v., 3. † Ibid. viii., 20. ‡ Luke xiv., 33.

is he who, out of love for God, out of a desire of possessing eternal life, becomes not merely poor in spirit, and detached in affections from earthly goods, but really renounces all his earthly possessions, and in poverty follows Jesus, poor, and, within the full sense of the word, can exclaim: "My God, and my all!" But those who are not called by God to this sacrifice, must at least be poor in spirit, if they wish to enter Heaven by the Gate of Poverty. They must not allow their hearts to be taken up with temporal goods, to be attached to them, to find their delight in them, and consider it the greatest misfortune to be deprived of them. They must rather be able to say with the Great Emperor, Francis the Second: "I would rather beg with my wife and children than commit a single mortal sin."

O ye rich ones of the earth! You cannot take with you into eternity the goods you possess. Only what you spend in good works can be said to belong to you! Hasten then, to become at least poor in spirit, to separate yourselves from all that the Gospel calls the riches of iniquity; attach not your hearts to the perishable goods of the world, and bear in mind that you must give a strict account of the administration of what the Lord has confided to you. And you, suffering poor of the world! bear the weight of your hard lot, with Christian courage, and with a sentiment of faith! keep before your mind the

great entrance of Poverty into eternal delights; frequently recall the words of St. Augustine: "O Lord! Thou preparest for me in Heaven unchangeable riches, namely, Thyself; and shall I here on earth ask of Thee gold, and silver, and precious stones which even sinners, the impious, the wicked possess? Ah! there was a day indeed when I asked such things of Thee as something great, worthy of having, and the thought occurred not to me that Thou didst keep Thyself in store for me in Heaven!"

THE GATE OF PURITY.

"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."* Happy are they who can enter by this Gate. How unutterable is the joy! How ennobling is the conviction! How consoling the assurance of those who can say, that during their whole lifetime, they have never mortally offended Almighty God. He whose happy portion in this life has been to guard himself successfully against the attacks of the serpent of impurity, who never by a sin against the Holy Virtue, has sullied his noble heart consecrated to God by the Sacrament of Baptism, possesses a treasure which exceeds all comparisons. He has a joyful as-

*Matt v, 8.

surance of eternal life. And if the Christian avoids not only mortal, but flies from even venial sins; if he spends weeks, months, aye! years, (which many saints by their example have shown us to be possible,) without committing a single wilful venial sin, he shall most undoubtedly behold, as the reward of a pure heart, this gate open to admit him into eternal Paradise. But if in a state of virginity one is not so pure as a St. Joseph and a St. Agnes; or in the married state, as a Tobias and a Sarah; or in a state of widowhood as a Judith and an Anne, must he give up all hope of entering through this third Gate of Heaven? By no means. Happy indeed are those who have preserved their innocence, and always walked in the way of the Lord! happy too are those whose sins the Lord has pardoned, and whose souls have been washed and purified in the Blood of the Lamb! At the very moment in which a sinner turns from his evil ways, at the instant he receives, in the Sacrament of Penance, the absolution of his sins, God blots out all his offences, forgets the past, presses him to His heart, loves him as before, nay, even more than before, and gives him the kiss of peace, the pledge of eternal life. If therefore a sinful Christian has sincerely returned to God, if he has repeatedly confessed his sins; and washed his soul in the Blood of the Lamb; and has the consciousness that, aided by Divine Grace, he has not, since

his return, relapsed a single time into mortal sin, he has a well-grounded assurance that he shall have a share in the holy promises beaming over the third entrance into Heaven.

In the last century, there lived in Bavaria, a Priest most zealous for the salvation of souls, Father Hofreuter, whose great love and charity for sinners were known far and near. A certain tavern-keeper, whose conscience had been bending beneath the weight of enormous sins, was at length moved by Divine Grace to think seriously of doing something for his poor soul. Fearing to allow it to remain longer in frightful danger of eternal death, he resolved to have recourse to Father Hofreuter. He therefore saddled his horse, and rode into the city in which this good Priest resided. When he had arrived at the clergyman's house, the poor man was so seized with fear and shame at the thought of confessing his sins, that he could not prevail on himself to knock at the door. The good Priest, luckily perceiving him, came out and spoke to him with all the tenderness of his Apostolical heart. "Friend," said he to him: "You want to go to confession, do you not? Come in, I will hear you with the greatest of pleasure." He did go in . . .

When the tavern-keeper, after having happily arranged matters with the Priest, was mounting his horse to return home, abounding in all the exuberance of joy usual to a soul in a state of

grace, he said to his horse: "Well, my poor nag, you have a much lighter load to carry home than you had to bring to the city." From that moment he was a completely changed man. Six years later, this poor man was in his grave. On his death-bed, after having received the last rites of God's holy Church he said to his Parish Priest: "I would request that as soon as my soul has departed, you would please inform Father Hofreuter for his consolation and to the glory of Divine Grace, that I have been true to the earnest promises I made him in my confession years ago. During these last six years I have not only committed no mortal sin, but with God's grace I have avoided even all deliberate venial sins." Oh happy are those who are pure of heart, they shall see God!

THE GATE OF SUFFERING.

"By a momentary, sinful laugh," says St. Peter Damian: "One purchases an eternal sorrow; and by a brief temporal sorrow one acquires an eternal joy." "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."* This is the inscription on the Fourth of Heaven's Gates. It is not a sentimental sadness, the sorrow of the

*Matt. v., 5.

world, but another two-fold sorrow to which Heaven is promised. It is the sorrow, the unceasing grief we feel for our fall, for our sins, which makes us exclaim with David: "Have mercy on me, O Lord! according to Thy great mercy. And according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity: Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise! Create a clean heart in me, O! God: and renew a right spirit within my bowels."* From this sorrow, so dear to a St. Augustine, which in every penitential soul is changed into love, arises another sorrow, namely, that God, the supreme good, should receive so small a share of the love of men whom He loves with an eternal love; the sorrow of seeing so many separated from the heart of Jesus, nay more! perhaps filled with hatred towards their Saviour. This two-fold sorrow is the expression of pure, interior love, as we see reflected in the saints. Word was brought to St. Ignatius that the labors of his children scattered over the world were producing great spiritual fruit. This news afforded unbounded joy to the heart of the saint; but casting a glance at a map of the world in the hall, he was filled with an indescribable sorrow; tears coursed down his furrowed cheeks, and he exclaimed: "O my God! how many places yet

* Ps. l.

remain where the Gospel has not been preached, where the name of Jesus is unknown! How many men do not yet know Thee, O my God!" With a similar feeling of grief and love St. Catherine of Sienna exclaimed: "I wish I could put myself at the very door of Hell, and prevent any one from going into that abode of every pain and sorrow and hate."

THE GATE OF MERCY.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."* O happy Faith, which gives us so easy and so sure a pledge of eternal life! "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord: and He will repay him."† God then becomes a debtor to those who show mercy. "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me."‡ The merciful man then becomes the benefactor of his God. These two great thoughts are alone sufficient to show what sentence the just may expect, on the last day. And in fact our Lord will say to them on that dreadful day: "Come ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink;

* Matt. v., 7. † Prov. xix., 17. ‡ Matt. xxv., 40.

I was a stranger and you took me in : naked and you covered me, sick and you visited me."* O how agreeable would it be to relate what faith, what experience teaches about the temporal and eternal blessings showered by Heaven upon the merciful! Yet we shall confine ourselves to a single remark of St. Austin : " God will never permit the loss of one who perseveringly, and in a spirit of Faith, exercises mercy towards others." The saint explains his meaning in the following words : " Though nothing else than supernatural charity can wash away our sins or keep us in a state of grace ; yet the Almighty will not call the merciful man to judgment at an unpropitious hour. He will generously send him the grace of conversion, and by true, sincere repentance, and penitential works, he shall be saved."

In a country where the Catholic religion is incredibly oppressed, where the most terrific penalties are threatened not only against him, who, convinced of the truth of the Catholic Faith should embrace its tenets, but even against him, who, in any way should contribute towards the conversion of another, in Russia—there lived a pious, fervent Catholic holding a very high office in the Government. Amongst his most intimate and dear friends was a zealous Russian Priest. On a certain day, it happened that his missionary duties brought the Priest to the town in which

* Matt. xxv., 34-35.

the Catholic officer resided; but having other and urgent calls on his sacred ministry he had resolved to leave town without visiting his friend. Still an interior voice seemed to say to him: "Step in for a moment, and let him know that you are in town, but important business will not permit you to remain." He answered this voice with: "I can't lose time—I'm in too great a hurry"—The voice returned a second, a third time: "Visit the officer." Thinking there might be something supernatural in this interior, persistent invitation, he said to himself—"Well, I shall stop a moment at the door and enquire how all are." The first person he saw was his friend, who said to him: "You are just in time—I have been most anxious to see you. My wife, who, as you know, is a Protestant, is at the point of death, and I hope she will not in this moment refuse your aid. Neither you nor she, I trust can be deterred by any alarming threats, from performing a duty the Almighty requires of you both." It was indeed as the officer had said. His lady was fast approaching the term of her earthly existence, and most ready to do what she thought God required of her. She renounced the errors of Protestantism, made a sincere general confession of her whole life, received absolution, and died like one of those lost sheep that the love of Jesus found in the last hour of their lives. But how could this happy soul ob-

tain such a grace whose consequence shall last for an eternity?

The key to this remarkable grace, which she carefully concealed from all, even from her husband during her life, was discovered after her death. From a journal which this noble lady kept, it appeared that she had taken the resolution never to let a day pass without performing some work of mercy, and, that she might have no scruples of doubt as to whether she had observed this resolution of her loving heart, she noted down in her journal each act of mercy corporal or spiritual that she had performed. She was faithful to her resolve. She showed mercy during life, to Christ's poor; Christ showed mercy to her, in her dying moment, and allowed her to enter into eternal joys through the Gate of Mercy.

THE GATE OF GOD'S WORD.

"Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it."* Behold a sign of election, a Gate to Heaven! "He that is of God," says our Lord, in another place: "heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God."† Yes the Lord has affirmed with an oath: "Amen, amen, I say unto you, that he

*Luke xi., 28. †John viii., 47.

who heareth my word, and believeth Him that sent me, hath life everlasting."* Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of God, which is a living word, that, like a two-edged sword, can pierce our hearts. Whoever then is indifferent about the word of the Lord, and spends years of his life unconcerned about it, shall feel his faith grow cold, and will entirely lose it. Does not this dreadful phenomenon which we all witness,—the great number that never think of their salvation,—arise from this cause, a want of zeal to hear the word of God? Why do so many remain sunk in the sleep of death, instructed and well-informed about every thing except what concerns their salvation, their eternal beatitude? We can see no other reason than a repugnance to hear God's word. Yes, this Divine word has conquered the world for Jesus Christ, has overturned the idols, has established the kingdom of virtue, and is to-day as effective as it was two thousand years ago. It awakens the conscience, enlightens the mind, moves the heart, inflames the will and enkindles love. It is the voice of the most High, and therefore has a Divine power. The poor mortal, called a Priest, who announces it, is only the channel through which this grace comes to us. "What am I?" asks St. Augustine, that glowing Preacher of the Gospel: "Alas! what else than the Sower's basket? The Lord has

*John v., 24.

placed in me what I communicate to you. Consider not the miserable appearance, the wretched condition of the basket, but the clearness and beauty of the seed, the omnipotence of the Sower." We readily, therefore, understand, if we reflect a moment, how well grounded, and how true the words of our Lord are: "Amen, amen, I say to you, that he who heareth my word, hath life everlasting."

THE GATE OF MEEKNESS.

"Blessed are the Meek."* How great this virtue is, how pleasing it is to God, and how meritorious for eternal life, we can conclude from the express recommendation of Jesus Christ. Let us listen to the lesson he gives us: "Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart."† As long as he lived on earth, Jesus, by the meekness of his heart, drew sinners to himself, and moved hardened hearts to penance. With what meekness did he not receive his traitorous disciple! With what meekness and patience did he not remain silent, whilst his tormentors struck him in the face, mocked him, spat upon him and tore his body with scourges! What a miracle of meekness he shows us, in the Sacrament of love! Whoever

* Matt. v., 4. † Matt. xi., 29.

succeeds in acquiring this virtue of our Lord, shall find an immense treasure, shall be endowed with the gift of drawing to himself the hearts of men. He will be capable of dexterously leading and governing souls, and of enabling them to advance rapidly in the way of salvation. Blessed and truly happy is the man who is meek of heart! Whoever by a complete and constant mastery over his passions, has secured for himself an undisturbed tranquility of mind, shall possess perfect charity towards all. He who is meek and friendly towards every one, who can receive an offence without manifesting any signs of anger, or an insult without returning an answer, can entertain the happy confidence of one day entering through the Gate of Meekness, the land of eternal promise. He who abstains from rashly judging others; who excuses all, compassionates all; who holds himself in low estimation; who never utters a word that could wound the most sensitive, can rely most confidently on these words of Jesus: "Judge not and you shall not be judged."* In short, whoever, in every thing, follows the example of Jesus, and of Mary, Virgin most meek, shall be a man after God's own heart; and he will, even in this life, enjoy, through the Gate of Meekness, glimpses of the delights of Paradise.

O that men would understand how very much depends on this virtue! How pleasing to God

* Luke vi., 37.

and our fellow men true, real, supernatural meekness is! O! then would they, even from their very youth, exert themselves to subdue their evil inclinations, to do violence to themselves, to preserve, in every circumstance of life that interior peace which the world and the gratification of passions cannot give. They would never so far forget themselves as to give expression to violent outbursts of impatience, and to pronounce unjust judgments against their neighbor; they would be inconceivably happy, even here upon earth.

About thirty years ago, there lived not far from the city of Raab in Hungary, a Priest whose rare and extraordinary meekness was famed throughout that country. It is related of him that when a boy and even when a youth, though possessing a pious, kind and loving heart, he was irritable and of a violent temper. Once it happened that he was so overcome by a terrible fit of angry passion, that losing all control over himself he struck a very affectionate brother in the face. As soon as the fault was committed, like all persons of this kind of temper, his heart was filled with such sorrow, and pierced with such regret, that he resolved, cost what it would, not only to contend against, but completely to subdue his naturally impetuous temper, utterly to eradicate so noxious a weed, and to become, as near as possible, like unto Jesus and Mary, our models.

Like St. Francis of Sales, he had the great happiness to see his efforts crowned with success; and this acquired virtue of perfect meekness won for him the love of God and man, and, as we have every reason to hope, secured for him a sure and happy entrance into Paradise.

THE GATE OF FORGIVENESS.

"Blessed are the peace-makers."* Now the sum total of all peace-making is the pardoning of injuries; it makes us children of God, and is a certain pledge of our eternal salvation. "Forgive, and it will be forgiven unto you; pardon, and it will be pardoned unto you!"† O Christian whoever you may be! you whose happy privilege it is to advance towards Heaven by the way of the imitation of christian suffering, ill-treatment, insults and injuries from men, raise your eyes and see how the God-man was treated by his enemies! Have you as much to complain of? Have your enemies been so cruel, so hard-hearted towards you? And how has Jesus taken revenge on His enemies? "Father, forgive them."‡ Have you heard of the insults they heaped upon him? Have you experienced a like treatment from the rage of your enemies? And how did Jesus avenge

* Matt. v., 9. † Sense of St. Matt. vi., 14. ‡ Luke xxiii 34.

himself? "Father, forgive them." How dreadful were the calumnies with which they sought to blacken his fair name and spotless character! Have your enemies been guilty of an equal offence against you? And what was Jesus' revenge? "Father forgive them." Are you holier, more innocent than Jesus? Are your enemies more faithless, more cruel, more ungrateful than the Jews were? And how did Jesus take His revenge? "Father forgive them—they know not what they do."* O! were people to meditate on the example Jesus has given us in this most important matter, they would understand that the forgiving of injuries, and the love of one's enemies are pledges of the possession of Heaven; that peace-making is a distinguishing mark of the children of God. Hast thou, oh happy soul! an occasion to pardon an offence, an insult, or an injustice? Do not let the opportunity pass; profit by it as by an infallible means of securing to thyself the kingdom of Heaven. These are extraordinary favors. When we see a good prospect of realizing a magnificent fortune, even at great personal sacrifices, fatigues, anxieties or insults, we say: what a splendid chance! and we hesitate not to undergo, and bear patiently every thing till we have secured the prize we had in view. Is not Heaven worth at least as much forbearance? Oh, if thou, my

* Luke xxiii., 34.

dear friend, hast ever sincerely, from thy heart, truly for the love of God, pardoned an enemy, thou canst take our Saviour at His word ; He must allow thee to enter the Paradise of delights ; thou hast secured to thyself a right to enter through the Gate of Forgiveness.

THE GATE OF PERSECUTION.

"Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."* This promise, radiating over the gate of Heaven is so precise, that it requires no explanation ; yet, that there should be no room for the plea of not having understood it, our Lord vouchsafed to be still more explicit. Listen to the following words recorded by St. Matthew : "Blessed are ye, when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake ; be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in Heaven."† Hence the more persecutions we suffer for the Name of Jesus, the more certain is the sign we have of being one day numbered amongst the elect of God. In contradistinction to this, as well as in a proof of it, let us conclude with the words of St. Gregory : "I assure you most undoubtedly, that the less

* Matt. v., 10. † Matt. v., 11-12.

christianly and piously one lives, the less he will have to suffer from persecution." These words of a man, eminent for his sanctity, for his intimate union with God, deserve serious and frequent consideration; they show who have a claim, a right to enter by the Gate of Persecution.

THE GATE OF GRACE.

With the greatest joy, with unbounded consolation we behold radiating over this gate, surrounded by a halo of heavenly glory, a Name which we all know, which we all love, in which we all confide, the Name of Mary! Yes Mary is the gate of Heaven! She is the Gate of Grace, "not only," writes St. Antoninus, "because all the treasures which the Almighty has poured out on the earth, have flowed through her generous hands, but also and especially because all those who ascend to Heaven, have through her aid, found admittance into eternal bliss, and because she is, in a particular manner, the refuge of all the Faithful, at the hour of their death." Through Mary, we have received Jesus who opened Heaven to us; through Mary's aid, we hope to find our judge merciful to us; through Mary, flow to us all the gifts of grace. Penetrated with these sentiments, St Germanus exclaims: "No one shall

be saved, except through thee, O Holy Virgin; no one shall receive graces except through thee, oh purest of Virgins; no one shall obtain mercy, except through thee, oh most glorious virgin! Those whom thou lovest, those for whom thou prayest, shall not be lost, they shall be eternally glorified! Oh Mary! Who can conceive how much we are indebted to thee? Through thy means has the gate to the heavenly country been opened to us!" Before the entrance to earthly paradise, God placed a Cherub with a flaming sword to prevent any one from again entering that abode of delights. God has chosen as Gate of Heaven, an humble Virgin, who is to exercise the office of mother towards us, who attracts us to her, protects us, loves us as a mother, and whose most earnest wish is to lead us into eternal life.

THE GATE OF PROMISE.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice."* The thirst after perfection, the thirst after virtue of every kind, the thirst after Divine love, the hunger after the food of life, the thirst after the blood of salvation, the worthy and oft repeated reception of the Holy Sacrament of the Altar give us a most certain hope of entering the

* Matt. v., 6.

kingdom of glory. And if, at the end of our lives, we shall have the happiness to receive with worthy, loving hearts, Jesus as a Viaticum, we shall take with us into eternity, an infallible guarantee of possessing God's own infinite joys. "He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood," says the Lord: "has everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day."* And he asks the all important question: "Dost thou believe?" Yes, oh Lord! we believe. And happy he who by the exercise of works of faith, proves and strengthens his belief! Frequently to be found at the Lord's Table, is a sign that we have not only been invited to the Marriage Festival of the Lamb, but that the day will come when having entered through the Gate of Promise, we shall really be seated at this table of God's eternal delights.

THE GATE OF DEATH.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for their works follow them."† "He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved."‡ "Be thou faithful unto death: and I will give thee the crown of life."§ Happy he who with St. Paul can exclaim: "I have fought a good fight, I have

*John vi., 55. †Apoc. xiv., 13. ‡Matt. x., 22. §Apoc. ii., 10.

finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest there is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord will render to all who love his coming."* By a happy death we gain every thing. If we have entered the Gates of Heaven, we are happy for all eternity.

PART VI.

The Entrance into Heaven.

A respectable and very wealthy gentleman, who had in his youth, received a thoroughly christian education, later on in life, as it unfortunately, but too often happens, was seized with the spirit of the age, and fell into the most deplorable indifference about his salvation. After having spent many years in this total forgetfulness of God and of every christian virtue, he was summoned by a severe sickness, to take the final step that awaits us all. In his inmost soul, he felt he was not in a state to expect a favorable judgment from his Creator; yet he absolutely refused to hear of any kind of preparation for death—of making his confession, of receiving the last Sac-

* II. Tim. iv., 7-8.

raments ; he would not even consent to allow a Priest so much as to visit himself and family. This blind obstinacy, and hardness of heart, at the last hour of life, are frequently a just punishment of God. Those who have passed their lives in sin, in forgetfulness of God, are at the moment of death strangely indifferent about what may be their lot for eternity. Having for years vainly invited them to return to Him, the Almighty remains silent at the last moment—they are not deserving of another call to salvation. This silence of God in the heart of a dying person is a terrific presage of the eternal separation of the unhappy soul from her supreme Good.

The wealthy gentleman of whom we spoke a moment ago, was blessed with a pious, truly christian wife. Happy is he who, called to the marriage state, can fined a true, a christian companion during the stormy voyage of life ! The heart of this good lady was fearfully anxious about her husband ; for she knew that, should he die without being reconciled to his God, he must be eternally lost. But all her exhortations, all her efforts to induce him to go to confession were in vain ; he would not listen to any thing of the kind. The very thought that her husband, whose unchristian life she but too well knew, should with all his sins appear before Jesus Christ, the judge of the living and the dead, was absolutely intolerable to the zealous soul of this loving wife.

No means she could imagine to effect his conversion, no matter how painful, how laborious was neglected by her. She prayed, performed penances, distributed alms, procured the prayers of others, all in vain. She went to her confessor to consult with him about means of effecting what she had most at heart. They came to the conclusion that the husband should by all means be prevailed upon to consent to receive a simple visit from the Priest. After great entreaties on the part of his wife and friends, probably more with a view to be relieved from their importunities than to benefit his soul, the sick man agreed to receive a visit from the clergyman, specifying however the condition, that not one word should be said about confession or preparation for death. Conducted to the apartment of the dying man, the Priest stood by the bed-side without uttering a single word—not even of inquiry about his health, or of sympathy for his sufferings, or of encouragement to patience. Wondering at his conduct, the sick man who, in spite of the conditions he had imposed upon the visit, looked for nothing less than an onslaught on impenitent sinners, boldly asked: "Well, Father," what are you thinking about?" The Priest answered: "On hearing of the express conditions on which alone you were willing to receive a visit from me, I concluded to accept it, and faithfully to observe the condition of not only

not speaking to you about doing something for your soul, but of not speaking to you at all. Now that you ask me what I am thinking about, I shall tell you. I was saying to myself—"O God! what a change in a little while will have taken place in the circumstances surrounding this gentleman! He is now in magnificently furnished apartments; but if he die without the signs of a lively Faith, he shall be cast into eternal darkness! He is now surrounded by a faithful, christian wife and loving, pious children, but in a short time he shall be in the society of reprobates! He is now on a bed of soft down, adorned with silken curtains; in a few hours, perhaps in one, he will be stretched on the avenging fires of hell!" "Stop, stop!" interrupted the sick man, whose faith began to awaken, and to act with all the vigor of his school days. "Father, I want to go to confession! I want to die a good christian death! I don't want to be damned!"——What a very different scene takes place when a virtuous truly christian soul approaches the gates of death! What a beatifying, indescribable ecstasy illumines the features of the departing Christian! He is entering not a prison, or a court of justice, or a strange land, but his true country, his own dear Father's house, the Paradise of infinite, eternal delights!

Let us represent to ourselves a soul the world would call unhappy. She has had in this

valley of tears a miserable and wretched existence! During many long years she has experienced nothing else than pains, sufferings and anxious cares. Unlike the rich and the great of this world, who spend their days in a delirium of joyous gratifications, she was born in a low condition, reared in poverty and all the anxieties accompanying extreme want. During many years, aye! during her whole life, she saw herself a persecuted and despised castaway, disowned by her relations, and intolerable to her superiors. Her days and nights she was compelled to pass amidst those who tormented her, who detested her, who hated her. She was falsely accused and unjustly condemned; she was afflicted with pain and sickness—she was trodden upon, trampled under foot by the world; she found no sympathizer, no encourager, no friend—she was forced to feel the keen sting of calumny and detraction that spared no efforts to destroy the only thing she could lay claim to—the conviction of having an unsullied, unstained, a spotless character before God and His Angels and the world. Yes, before God and His Angels, she was spotless! In the midst of all her afflictions she remained true to her Creator, to whom she was aware her heart was perfectly known, and for whose sake she patiently, without a murmur, bore her severe and numerous trials. From her very childhood, she had served and loved Him in purity

and innocence; or if, in her youth, she did, for a moment, forget her duty to Him, she washed that fault away by tears of love, by the precious blood from the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In the true penitential spirit of the children of God and the Church, she offered to the Sacred Heart of our Lord, for her own sins and those of the world, all her sufferings, her persecutions, her humiliations, her sickness, her sorrows, and she placed her hope and her confidence in Him alone who will reward the just. Now, if at the moment, when this soul leaves the prison of flesh in which she had to endure so many afflictions, she happens to be in a state of grace, enshrined in God's sanctifying love, an Angel, or the Queen of Angels, the ever Blessed Virgin herself will conduct her to God's presence where she shall hear from the lips of Jesus Christ, her Judge, the sweet and consoling words: "come, my spouse, thou shalt be crowned;"* "come thou blessed of my Father, enter into the joy of thy Lord!"† How trifling and how insignificant all the trials which she had been called on to suffer, will then appear!

When at her Entrance into Heaven she sees for the first time the brilliant, endless glory of Paradise; when she experiences that joy, that state of happiness which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, which the heart of man has not been able to conceive; how ample, how exceeding all

* Cant. iv., 8.

her expectations she considers the reward of her fidelity to her Lord! When she beholds a noble spirit, a holy Angel advancing towards her with the crown she has merited, nay more! which her afflictions have *won* for her; when she sees every sigh of love for God, every tear of repentance, every offering of pain and sorrow, receive at the hands of the Angel its own peculiar reward, its own crown of Heaven's most precious materials, how she must be moved to exclaim: "Oh happy, thrice happy humiliations, contempt, calumnies, insults, offences that have procured me such overwhelming joy!" Infallible Truth itself has assured us that God will reward every act, even the most insignificant one, if done out of love for Him; a glass of cold water, a piece of bread given by a poor man to his poorer brother shall have its own degree of eternal glory. How indescribable, how varied, how multiplied, how intense the happiness that awaits us all in Heaven! Approaching the portals of eternal bliss, we shall have the unspeakable pleasure of being met, and congratulated and welcomed by those dear ones whom we so sincerely loved on earth, at whose departure from life, overcome by our natural feelings we so bitterly wept; for whose souls we, ignorant of their state beyond the grave, so fervently prayed. Parents advance to meet their children, children to meet their parents; brothers, their sisters, and sisters their brothers; husbands their

wives, and wives their husbands. They bear in their hands, for the newly arrived conquerors over sin, the devil and the world, victorious crowns, palms of victory! O! imagine if you can, our exceeding joy when we shall behold for the first time, the innumerable multitude of the Elect—all the Faithful, all the Saints from Adam to the last blessed soul that has received her eternal reward! What joy will inundate our souls, when we shall see for the first time, in the full splendor of their glory, the great servants of God, the first Saints of our Church! When for the first time we shall behold thee, St. Joseph, thee, St. Peter, and thee, St. Paul, and thee, beloved Disciple of the Lord, and thee, good St. Augustine, a converted sinner, and thee holy Patron, and you St. Teresa, St. Agnes, St. Catherine, St. Gertrude, and thee, holy Father Ignatius, and all the Saints of the Society of Jesus in Heaven, all you saints of the Holy Catholic Church; when for the first time, our souls shall behold Thee, O! Mary, Queen of Heaven! when, intoxicated with delight we shall rest our heads on thy maternal bosom; Oh! who can picture the stream, the flood, the ocean of delights with which our whole being will be penetrated? What, oh! what will it be when, for the first time we shall behold our own dear Lord, our sweet Saviour, when we shall be allowed to behold face to face, the thrice Holy

God, the Creator and Sustainer of the World ! ! ! .....Grant, O Lord ! that this great and eternal joy may one day be ours ! Grant, that we may soon reach the pleasures of the Blessed ! O Beloved Fatherland ; we greet thy distant shore ! Our hearts, impatient to possess thee, sigh for the moment when we can call thy delights our own !

A truly pious, but very simple old lady being on the point of death, sent for her Father confessor who administered to her all the Sacraments and consoled her with the hope that in a little while she would be admitted to the immense joys of Heaven. The good old woman did not require any consolation or encouragement—she was perfectly tranquil and resigned ; she feared not to take the step that would bring her into eternity, before God's eternal Tribunal, for she had spent her life in loving and serving her Creator. "Father," said she, in all the simplicity of her heart, "Father, dear, there is only one thing that troubles me—it is this : When I get into Heaven in the presence of God and of all the grand people surrounding His throne, what shall I, a poor, unlettered woman be able to say ? I shall be so put out that I shall not be able to find one word to say to the people." "Oh my dear child, don't be uneasy about that "—answered the Confessor, who, though a very learned man, was as simple as a child—and also a most holy person. "When you will have entered Heaven and will

stand before the Throne of God, simply say: Praised be Jesus Christ!* And all Heaven will answer: For ever, for ever, for ever, and ever"!!

Therefore the praise of God, the praise of our Saviour, the unutterable, everlasting thanks that we have attained our end; that our freedom has withstood the test to which it was subjected; that we have been victorious over the world, the flesh, and the devil; that we have safely passed through all dangers; that through the merits of Jesus we have entered the land of peace and promise; that we are and eternally shall be blessed and happy—will be the first utterances of our ecstasies, the first exclamations of our overjoyed hearts!

When, after a long absence, the son returns to the paternal home, and has shed tears of joy at seeing again his dear father and his beloved mother; and when, after the many dangers he had encountered, the many fatigues he had endured, he reposes tranquilly in the bosom of his family, he finds no thought more consoling than that of experiencing and knowing the love with which his parents, during these long years, had cared for him; the anxiety with which they had watched over him, to diminish his fatigues and to supply his wants. Thus it is with a newly beatified soul. After the first transports of astonish-

*The usual expression amongst Catholics in Germany, when meeting, or visiting.—*Translator.*

ment are over, she will see, not with the light of faith, not as it were in a mirror or through a veil, but as clearly, as evidently as she sees objects in the light of the midday sun, the unbounded, endless love of God for her. In Heaven we shall know how God has loved us from all eternity, how He drew our souls from the treasury of His divine heart, as most precious diamonds, which He wished to see shine eternally in the crown of His glory. We shall then most clearly understand the grandeur and the nobleness of the end for which He created us; we shall then see how, after our fall, He did not, in His justice, cast us all away, as He did the rebel angels, but how in His mercy He redeemed us and became reconciled to us after our most ungrateful conduct; how, for our sake, He did not spare His own much beloved Son, but delivered Him up for us. We shall then, O Jesus! understand how great is Thy love for men; how much Thou hast suffered for us; how Thou hast shed Thy very heart's blood for us! We shall then discover what a treasure of grace Thou hast left us in the Holy Word of God which Thou hast revealed to us; in the Sacrament of Penance, and in the most Holy, most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, which Thou hast established for us! We shall then perceive how Thou, O God! hast cared even for our temporal interests; how Thou hast given us good parents, good brothers, good friends, generous benefactors;

how prodigal of thy precious graces Thou hast been to us; how Thou hast saved us from many and threatening dangers; with what love Thou hast ever received us! When all this, with infinitely more, suddenly presents itself clearly, evidently before the soul just admitted into Paradise, into what exclamations of gratitude, of reciprocal love, she will break forth! And as the reprobate soul curses and execrates every thought of her mind, every object, every soul, and every demon she approaches—all the past, and all the future—so the saved, the beatified soul is delighted with the result of the past, rejoices in the present and future of her eternal happiness, is pleased with and blesses all that surrounds her! "Blessed," she will say, "blessed be the hour I was born! Blessed be the hour of my baptism in the only true, and therefore only saving Catholic Faith! Blessed be my good christian parents, my christian teachers, all of whom so largely contributed towards procuring me my present exceedingly great happiness! Blessed be my husband, or (as the case may be) my wife, who changed my life, who saved me from a miserable eternity! Blessed be the servant maid whose christian example encouraged me to walk in the path of virtue! Blessed be the sermon which opened my eyes to the enormity of the life I was leading, or to the greatness of the danger that threatened my salvation! Blessed be the hour in

which I broke off from those whose wicked example, whose corrupt ways were inevitably leading me to eternal ruin! Blessed be the moment that beheld me change my life! Blessed be the priest whose zeal and direction enabled me to determine on leading a life of virtuous abnegation, whose learning taught me to know God better, who conducted me to piety, to virtue and to perfection! Blessed be the hour of my general confession, blessed be the tears and sobs of my repentant contrition! Blessed be my poverty, my suffering and my sorrows that have secured me so great a happiness! Blessed be the love, the patience and the mercy of my God!!" And after each blessing all Heaven will answer: "Forever, forever, forever!"

Such—ah, no! not such! far different from, and infinitely superior to the loftiest expressions of the most pliant language are the joy and happiness of a soul on its entering the portals of infinite delights!

"We know," writes St. Paul: "if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in Heaven."* "We have not here a lasting city, we seek one that is to come."† We are not citizens of this world—we are here strangers surrounded by strangers, encompassed by enemies determined to destroy our eternal

* 2 Cor. v., 1. † Heb. xiii., 14.

lives, to deprive us of our eternal treasures. We are here in the midst of impenetrable darkness, ignorant of the precise place and nature of the dangers which we know lie in our path. We are citizens of the Heavenly Jerusalem, of the Holy City of Sion! Is it then astonishing that a soul gives expression to her joy, when she has escaped from her enemies, and has joined her dear and true friends; when she has happily evaded all the snares set for her destruction; when she has safely passed through the enveloping darkness, and reached the beatifying light of God? No sorrowing recollections, no painful remembrances, no regrets of any kind for the newly beatified soul! She rejoices in the past, the present, and the future.

How insignificant is the beauty of the cities of this world, even the most magnificent, in comparison with the wondrous beauty of the City of God! How lovely, how desirable and how entrancing is that holy city of God, where truth is victory, where sanctity is nobility, where beatitude is peace, where Eternity is the life of its inhabitants!

Who are those who would consent to live in abject poverty, when princely fortunes are offered them? Who then, we can with greater reason ask, are those who can so far forget their own interests as to set their hearts on the pomp, the grandeur and the magnificence of this world,

and neglect the occasion of acquiring eternal titles to infinite honors, unparalelled dignities and unequaled glory? Why should we not watch with studious care over every circumstance of our lives, lest we lose the golden opportunity so conveniently placed within our reach? Why should we not be earnest in our efforts to secure it? We can now understand why so many are indifferent about the world and all it can give; why so many, though obliged to live in the world, so heartily despise all its pleasures; why so many absolutely, completely renounced the world, fled from it, made war against it. They wished to secure for themselves and others, glory, honor, titles infinitely above all that the world promises, but which it cannot give. They wished to open the eyes of their fellow-beings to the great, to the enormous loss they would incur if they attached their hearts to earthly objects, if they failed to strive after the possession of the glory and honor of the City of God.

"The cities of this world are as different from the City of God, as Heaven is from earth, as the joys of a day differ from those of eternity; as the momentary applause depending for its existence on the will of the fickle human mind, differs from the glory that lasts eternally; as the society of mortals differs from the society of Angels; as the light of the sun and stars differs from Him whose Almighty Power, by a single act of his

will brought forth sun, stars and all else from nothing. God has built this city, as the Church sings, out of living stones. It is a living City ; God is its life. It is a wise City, God's intellect guides it. It is a happy City, God's presence fills it. It derives its light from meditation on God. It is inseparable from God, therefore secure in happiness. It sees, feels, and loves. It possesses life in the Eternity of God ; it rejoices in the light of the Truth of God ; it enjoys its happiness through the bounty of God."*

PART VII.

The Triumph After the General Judgment.

At the end of the just man's earthly career, his soul appears alone before our Lord Jesus Christ ; and, whilst in accordance with the favorable sentence pronounced by the Judge, Heaven is being opened, and the spirit enters the glory of Paradise, the lifeless body remains behind on

*St. Augustine.

earth ; and men seeing in it the terrifying effects of death, shudder at the destruction of the grave. At the end of time, on the day of universal judgment, the triumph of the just will be complete in every respect. In the presence of the innumerable multitude of the entire human race, assembled in the valley of Josaphat, their souls and glorified bodies will receive the reward of their labors and of their fidelity. O how changed all things will be then! O Thou poor Lazarus! who, despised and suffering didst lie at the door of the rich man, and didst ask in vain for the crumbs that fell from his table ; thou livest now in happy abundance ; thou dwellest amidst intoxicating joys, which unlike thy earthly afflictions that have all passed away, shall last eternally! And all ye, who are scandalized at the unequal distribution of earthly goods, at the apparent disorders of this world's affairs, who with the Royal Prophet exclaim : "My feet were almost moved ; my steps had well nigh slipt. Because I had a zeal on occasion of the wicked ; seeing the prosperity of sinners,"* postpone your judgment of God's Providence till the day of revelations, till the day of completion, till the day of judgment. Now you see as it were, only a small obscure spot of the grand painting. You do not understand the ways by which God leads us to Himself; you consider as a great misfortune the

*Ps. lxxii, 2.

cross he has placed on the shoulders of his friends and children. Oh! of what a different opinion you will be on the day of general retribution. When the hand of the Almighty will have raised you from the dust, placed you among the princes of his people, and seated you on the throne of his glory, will you then complain of your former low condition, or of the poverty you suffered? Seeing your afflictions rewarded with a flood of heavenly delights, will you regret to have patiently borne with sickness and sorrow? Will you then consider as a misfortune, those sufferings, those crosses which will have procured you the possession of Heaven, this superabundance of heavenly glory?

At that all-important, at that terrible moment, when the whole world will tremble with fear, when Jesus the supreme judge of the living and the dead, will with great power and majesty, appear in the clouds of Heaven, how happy, how infinitely happy will those be, who through penance, through the sufferings and trials of this life, shall have purified their hearts from sin! O! contrast your state, ye suffering children of God, with that of the children of the world, who, acknowledging alas! too late, the guilt of their sinful consciences, and being a prey to the most frightful despair, exclaim: "Fall upon us ye mountains; ye hills, cover us."* Strong in all you

* Luc. xxiii., 30.

have endured for God's sake, in the midst of all these lamentations of despair, you will fearlessly present yourselves before the King of Kings; you will hear your sentence with a joyful countenance, with eyes full of gladness! The shadow of that cross whose appearance dashes the sinners to the ground, will be your protection; the Blood of the Lamb, which reproaches them with their ingratitude, will be your justification. You are no strangers to the heart of your judge, and you well know how it loves you. Why, then, should you fear, why should you tremble? Look at the thrice Holy person who occupies the judgment-seat. He directs His looks towards you with heavenly meekness and compassion; He extends His arms towards you, He takes you in His wounded hands, and with a Divine benignity He addresses you these sweet, consoling words: "Come, oh, come to My heart!" O! how sweet to my ear! how consoling to my heart! to hear at the last judgment, from the lips of my Saviour, the enchanting words: "Come, ye Blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* "Enter into the joy of the Lord."† I, a poor creature, dust and ashes, am now happy for eternity! I, a sinful being, am now in the society of Saints! My sins, then, have been obliterated, all has been forgiven, all has been forgotten! The Love of

* Matt. xxv., 34. † Ibid. 23.

God is now my portion for ever and ever! What joy! what unspeakable exultation! I am happy, I am blessed. Blessed by the Father and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I can now say in all truth, Heaven is my inheritance, my Father's house, my kingdom.

And lo! the eternal High Priest, the Lord of armies will arise and crown me with the crown of honor, and encircle my brow with the diadem of immortality; he will put on me the garment of undying glory, and will place in my hand the palm of victory, the sceptre of royalty! My name shall be written in beaming characters on the base of the throne of the Most High; a throne will be prepared for me, and God's treasures, God's beatitude, all that is God's will be mine. Then shall I exclaim: "Too much, O Lord! too much." The happiness, the joy, the reward is too great! "Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honorable."* But Jesus will answer: Come, come! "Enter into the joy of thy Lord."† "Thou hast fought a good fight, thou hast finished thy course, thou hast kept the Faith; receive the crown of justice."‡ "For I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in: naked and you covered me: sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me."§ "Enter into the

*Ps. cxxxviii., 17. †Matt. xxv., 23. ‡II. Tim. iv., 7-8. §Matt. xxv., 35.

joy of thy Lord." "I myself am thy reward exceeding great,"* for, "as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me."† Therefore it was Jesus—I shall exclaim, astounded at the fact. Therefore it was Jesus to whom, in the person of the poor man, I showed mercy? Has Jesus then become my debtor for the little work of charity I had performed? Does Jesus, then, consider every drink of water given out of love to God, as handed to Himself? Does He, then, number every sigh of regret for the past, every sigh of compassion, and every sigh of love? Does Jesus, then, indeed reward with Divine liberality, the trifling tribute of my Faith and of my constancy? Oh, how endlessly great, how incomprehensible, is the love of God!

At the Universal Judgment, the Lord will weigh in the scales of sanctity our every work. Every act of christian virtue receives a crown of heavenly glory. But all those apparent virtues which shone only in the eyes of the world, which did not proceed from a pure heart, out of love to God, will pass unrewarded by this Supreme Judge. The vain praise and honor gained from men, and for which the work had been done, were their fruitless, their only reward. Such unhappy persons who toiled for this ignoble end, will be like the barren tree that produced magnificent leaves, and splendid flowers, but which bore no fruit. There,

*Gen. xv., i. †Matt. xxv, 40.

one will see friends, brothers, who dwelt under the same roof, who accomplished the same work, who carried the same crosses, and yet only one will be crowned, the other will go away empty-handed. One had labored and suffered for God, the other for the esteem of the world. There will be rich and poor—some obtain the treasures of Heaven, others go without any reward. Riches and poverty have in God's eyes no other value than the proper use we make of them. We shall see laborers, fathers of families, who, day and night, found fault with, and murmured against Divine Providence, then ask of God, a reward for their labors and fatigues. But of these, too, it will be true to say: some will obtain Heaven, others must go away empty-handed; for God distributes his rewards according to the measure of our Faith, our intentions and our fidelity.

Thus, oh God! at the universal Judgment, Thou wilt manifest Thy justice, fulfill Thy promises, justify Thy providence, and proclaim the fidelity of Thy servants. And when all will have been terminated, and I shall have successfully withstood the trial to which the Judge of the living and the dead subjected me, I shall enter body and soul into the heavenly kingdom; and the knowledge, the possession, the vision and the happiness of God will be my eternal, my happy portion; and never shall my hymn of triumph cease: "The Lamb that was slain, is worthy to receive

power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them: I heard all saying: To him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever."*

THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM.

"Glorious things are said of thee, O City of God."† "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord."‡ Enraptured during a similar meditation, another prophet exclaims: "Oh Israel! how great is the house of God: and how vast is the place of his possessions! It is great and hath no end: it is high and immense."§ A like feeling of astonishment and of longing desires filled the heart of the great St. Augustine, when meditating on the beauty of the heavenly Jerusalem. As he himself assures us, his heart was literally on fire with the greatness of his love for this, his future home. Whoever has read his "Confessions," will have found in that

* Apoc. v., 12-13. † Psalms lxxxvi., 3. ‡ Psalms lxxxiii., 1.
§ Bar. iii, 24.

soul-inspiring book, an exuberance of love for Heaven, which should both shame and warm our cold, frosty hearts. "O Wonderful House! O glorious palace, beaming with heavenly light!" writes this great Doctor: "My soul is in ecstasy at the sight of thy incomparable beauty! Oh, thou happy abode of the majesty of my God, who has built thee, who rules thee, who dwells in thee! Ah! let sinners possess the earth, and blind themselves with the dust which they like to throw about them; as for me, I will retire to my quiet little all, and there yielding to my strong passion and longing after thy beauty, I will intone unto thee hymns, expressive of the love of my heart! There, with indescribable sighs, I will bewail the misery of my pilgrimage, and raise my heart on high to the heavenly Jerusalem, my dear Fatherland, towards which are directed the first, the sweetest wishes of my spirit."

Already, about two thousand years before St. Augustine's day, the devout Tobias had drawn some true sketches of this city of God. Full of astonishment at the beauty of this heavenly dwelling, he exclaims, in the spirit of prophecy: "Thou shalt shine with a glorious light: and all the ends of the earth shall worship thee. Nations from afar shall come to thee: and shall bring gifts, and shall adore the Lord in thee, and shall esteem thy land as holy. For they shall

call upon the great name in thee.....The gates of Jerusalem shall be built of sapphire, and of emerald, and all the walls thereof, round about, of precious stones. All its streets shall be paved with white and clean stones : and alleluia shall be sung in its streets."* But nowhere do we find a more animated description of the city of God than in those mysterious Revelations we call the *Apocalypse* of St. John. It is understood, of course, that with our poor earthly ideas, we cannot properly comprehend these images and descriptions; the goods of Heaven and their beauty, are far above earthly and perishable jewels and treasures ; they infinitely surpass all that the human mind can represent to itself, all that human language can depict.

Heaven is a manifestation of God's almighty power ; and all that man can imagine great and glorious, is merely a faint, scarcely perceptible ray of the brilliancy of the city of God, where the Lord dwells in unapproachable light. Hence we can understand that the meaning of St. John's description of the heavenly Jerusalem is mysterious, symbolical and spiritual. Whoever may wish to comprehend, to penetrate the meaning of this mysterious Revelation, as thoroughly as limited human intelligence can, may read the exposition of the Apocalypse by the Holy Fathers ; or, perhaps with greater satisfaction,

* Tob. xiii., 13-15, 21-22.

Cardinal Bellarmine's golden book, called *The Felicity of the Saints*. For us at present, let it suffice to hear the description of the city of God, in St. John's own words. No one knows anything better to say of it. We shall perfectly understand it, when, as we hope it will one day be the case, we shall, with God's grace, enter this vast palace of every joy.

Let us, therefore, open the book of the Apocalypse, and hear what the beloved disciple of the Lord says: "And there came one of the seven Angels. . . . and spoke with me, saying: Come and I will show thee the bride; the wife of the Lamb. And he took me up in spirit to a great and high mountain: and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, having the glory of God, and the light thereof was like to a precious stone, as to the jasper stone, even as crystal. And it had a wall, great and high, having twelve gates, and in the gates, twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. On the east, three gates; on the north, three gates; and on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb . . . And the city lieth in a four square, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth . . And the building of the wall thereof was of jasper

stone : but the city itself pure gold, like to clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper : the second sapphire : the third, a chalcedony : the fourth, an emerald : the fifth, sardonix : the sixth, sardius : the seventh, chrysalite : the eighth beryl : the ninth, a topaz : the tenth, a chrysoprasus : the eleventh, a jacinth : the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, one to each : and every several gate was of one several pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein. For the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof, and the Lamb. And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. And the nations shall walk in the light of it : and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates thereof shall not be shut by day : for there shall be no night there . . . And there shall not enter into it any thing defiled, or that worketh abomination and maketh a lie, but they that are written in the book of life of the Lamb."* "And there shall be no curse any more : but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. And they shall see

*Apoc. xxi.

his face: and His name shall be on their foreheads....and they shall reign for ever and ever."*

O God, what a description! And yet, all these pictures of external pomp whose outlines St. John sketches in so masterly a style, this unrivaled city, this heavenly Sion whose streets are paved with transparent gold, whose walls are built of crystal, and ornamented with precious stones, is not to be compared with the exalted conception which the Holy Ghost has revealed through the mouth of the Royal Prophet David, namely: that this city of God will be built of all the riches and treasures of his mercy, and that its greatest ornament will be God's truth and justice; to this St. Augustine adds, that love cements together the living stones of which this glorious city is composed.

THE NEW MAN IN HEAVEN.

"Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return."† This is the punishment of sin. But because Christ has conquered sin, and hell, and death and the grave, and is risen from the tomb, we shall not remain dust, but like Him, we shall

*Apoc. xxii., 3, 4, 5. † Gen. iii., 19.

rise again to life. Not only the soul, but even the body of the just man is called to the kingdom of God, to Heaven and to immortality. After having undergone its course of dissolution, my body will on a day, which none but God can tell, hear in its grave, the voice of the Son of the Most High, will again be a living being and will rise from the tomb! How often has the just soul that has already entered the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, looked down on this globe, and remembered the earthly mantle it had consigned to the cold, dissolving grave! Sanctified by baptism, purified by penance, deified, I might almost say by the reception of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, the christian body reposes for years, perhaps for centuries in the cold, unfeeling earth, but in holy ground, in a consecrated spot, beneath the shade of the sign of redemption, in the company of the earthly remains of many other believing children of God, and expects its resurrection on the last day. Finally, at an hour that no creature can foretell, the almighty trumpet of Resurrection shall give its awakening blast, and the earth and the sea shall surrender those bodies they have so long retained captives in their bosoms. And just as the reprobate soul must unite with her body, which, during this life, was a companion of her sins, an instrument of her crimes, in order that body and soul may suffer eternally; so will the breath of

God give life to the mouldering ashes of the departed just, in order that body and soul may be eternally rewarded. "God redeemeth their lives from destructiou, He crowneth them with mercy and compassion. He satisfieth their desires with good things: their youth shall be renewed as the eagle's."* The bodies of the just shall be clothed with power and beauty, and, once more united with their souls, shall live eternally happy. Then, at last, all will be accomplished; and the elect will enter into the fullness of their joy and beatitude. All that is old will have passed away; and the word of the Lord will be fulfilled: "Behold I make all things new."†

Should a king, who had been captivated by the beauty and virtue of an humble youthful shepherdess, declare his love to the poor maiden, and make her his bride, what an overwhelming sensation of wondering delights, the new and unexpected change would produce in her soul, though she should still continue to reside in her humble home! But when, with a grand retinue of his nobility, with great show and pomp, with music and royal display, he should lead away this newly made queen, from the lowly cot in which she had been born, and introduce her into a most magnificent palace, seat her on a royal throne, and encircle her brow with

*Sense of Ps. cii. † Apoc. xxi., 5.

a most costly diadem, how great, how far beyond all she had ever imagined, would be the change in her life! Thus the Eternal King will, as it were, create anew everything for those whose innocence of life, whose heavenly beauty have merited for them the incomparable honor, the inexpressible happiness of being selected as the beloved children, the dear spouses of the King of Kings. "He will make all things new." He will make the abode new, the man new, the society new, the joys new, the body new, the life new, the heart new, the spirit new, the mind new! Now, the better to understand this new life in Paradise, let us dwell a moment on what Faith teaches us concerning the new man—on the properties of our bodies after the resurrection.

St. Paul says: "We shall all indeed rise again: but we shall not all be changed;"* that is to say, we shall not all be freed from the horrors of the grave; for the resurrection of the sinner is a second death. "And hell and death were cast into the pool of fire. This is the second death."† Yet we wish to confine our few remarks to the resurrection of the just. What a change! what a happy change our newly risen bodies will have undergone! We know with the certainty of Divine Faith, that our mortal, destructible bodies shall be clothed with immortality. And as

*I. Cor. xv., 51. †Apoc. xx., 14.

Christ arose from the dead, so will our poor, miserable bodies arise surrounded with the brilliancy of His body. Hence it follows that after the resurrection there shall be neither defect nor imperfection in our bodies. From the expression of St. Paul,* the Holy Fathers conclude that we shall arise in the full age of Christ, about thirty-three years. Our bodies shall be a thousand times handsomer than the body of the first man, when issuing from the hands of the Creator; they shall be clothed with light; we shall be like unto Angels, like the children of God, according to the image of the majesty and glory of the body of Jesus Christ. "For we know, if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in Heaven. For in this also we groan, desiring to be clothed upon with our habitation that is from Heaven . . . For we also, who are in this tabernacle, do groan, being burthened."†

The first quality with which our newly risen bodies will be gifted is *agility*. "It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body."‡ Our souls shall not be as they have hitherto been, impeded in their movements, and even oppressed by their companions of earthly life. Then the body with a wonderful agility will follow each movement of the soul. The body will not,

* Eph. iv., 13. † II. Cor. v., 1, 2, 4. ‡ I. Cor. xv., 44.

as St. Paul tells us, change its nature, it will not be a spirit; but like the body of Christ, it will be endowed with the agility of a spirit, and as St. Bernardinus remarks, its movements will equal the rapidity of thought. What a wonderful change! More swiftly than the eagle cuts through the air, quick as lightning, as rapidly as my thought bounds from one extremity of the world to the other, from the earth to the farthest star, shall my risen and glorified body accompany my spirit. And St. Augustine says that: "Whithersoever the spirit wishes to flee, there too in an instant the body is; and as my soul with thought's unfettered speed, darts from where bright morning's signs appear, to those distant waters beneath whose waves the king of day refreshes his weary steeds, so my risen, and glorified body with equal step accompanies. As my soul will in Heaven most perfectly obey the Creator, so my glorified body will with equal love obey the soul. "And lest we should think this impossible," says St. Anselm: "consider some natural facts. See an image of this agility and rapidity in the sun's streaming rays, which, piercing the clouds, enlighten the world in an instant from east to west. Behold the Angels! In a twinkle, they descend from Heaven to earth, and again return from earth to Heaven. Now in Heaven, when time will be no more, men shall be as Angels, and the glorified body will meet with no obstacle in

following the spirit with the swiftness of an Angel."*

This wonderful agility will become far more perfect by another gift with which our newly risen bodies shall be enriched—the gift of *subtilty*—that is to say, a *property* which, without depriving our bodies of their form and extension, renders them capable of passing through every obstacle, of penetrating every object, with the facility of thought. This peculiarity, like all other supernal gifts, will be communicated to us after the model of our Resurrection, Christ's body, which, whilst the doors and windows were securely fastened for fear of the Jews, appeared to His disciples in the Cenacle, where they were assembled; and also in an instant disappeared from the eyes of the disciples at Emmaus. St. Thomas, the Angelical Doctor, asserts that this property of the glorified body of a Saint confers upon it a brilliancy, a majesty, and an activity, which produce in it a greater resemblance to a spiritual substance than even agility does; yet it does not deprive it of its natural qualities, for we can touch it, feel it, as is evident from the words of the Lord to His Disciples, after His resurrection.

The Third quality of the risen body is its extraordinary brilliancy, clearness and transparency, which Theologians call *Glory*. The Holy

* Wisdom iii., 7.

Scriptures say: "The just shall shine, and shall run like sparks among the reeds;"* they will be as transparent as crystal, as brilliant as gold. This transparency, which renders the bodies of the Just so surpassingly beautiful, will be, as it were, the reflected rays of that overflowing stream of beauty which the soul derives from the light of glory. This light is stronger, more brilliant than the light of the sun and moon together, as St. John says, and will penetrate the bodies of the Blessed as the rays of the sun penetrate crystal, which, by the passing of these rays through it, becomes more brilliant than it was or could be without them. "Yes," adds St. Augustine: "The heavenly light of our bodies will as far excel the brilliant light of the earthly sun, as the light of the sun here on earth exceeds that of our bodies." To this, the Prophet Isaias refers when he says: "And the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold as the light of seven days."*

The Fourth quality of the glorified body, is *impassibility*, that is, that it can never more suffer. This our body, yet in earthly life so tender, so sensitive to every pain, to every little change of the atmosphere, to every contradiction, will by this wonderful gift, become perfectly free from, and incapable of any painful im-

* Isai. xxx., 26.

pression. For "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more."* Hunger, thirst, heat, cold, fatigue, all that can give pain to the body, shall be no more; though the body were to go through the flames, it could feel no painful sensation. And, indeed, it is right and just that the glorified bodies should never again be exposed to suffer or to be disturbed, for they are called to sing without intermission the praises of their Creator, in complete, certain, assured, eternal Beatitude. "Jesus Christ will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of His glory, according to the operation whereby also He is able to subdue all things to Himself."†

These wonderful properties bestowed upon the body of the new man in Heaven serve to make him more capable of enjoying the happiness which, one day in Heaven, shall be given him, according to the measure of the good works he has performed on earth. Had not Faith enlightened us concerning the nature of a glorified body, we should be far less capable than we are, of representing to ourselves the happiness that is prepared for us in Paradise for the pleasure of our senses.

* Apoc. xxi., 4. † Phil. iii., 21.

THE LIGHT OF GLORY.

Our simply entering Heaven does not complete that happiness we have all been taught to sigh for in the future state. True, to reside in a magnificent palace, though no other pleasure should be met with than that of being protected by the marble walls from the storms which those outside may be enduring; of faring sumptuously, though it should be alone; of being certain that no accident, no malice can ever deprive us of the happiness, such as it is, which we enjoy, would indeed be worth securing—but something infinitely greater is within our reach. For, besides entering the eternal portals of the Celestial Paradise, in order to attain the possession of essential Beatitude, in order to behold with our eyes, not an image of, but the thrice holy, triune God Himself, the Divine Omnipotence and Wisdom must disclose to us a new, a more astounding miracle.

One, whom the Holy Scriptures declare to be the most gentle of men, who was deemed worthy to become the companion of the Almighty, to go with Him as a friend would go with a friend, was so inflamed with the desire of seeing God, of learning to know His beauty, that with all the warmth of His loving heart, he exclaimed: "If, therefore, I have found favor in Thy sight, show

me Thy face, that I may know Thee, and may find grace before Thy eyes."* His noble desire could not be gratified; for the Lord said: Oh Moses! thy wish cannot yet be accomplished, thy request cannot yet be granted. I shall show thee all that is good, the Supreme Good Himself, but not yet. In Heaven thou wilt see Me, know Me, enjoy Me, but at present I cannot accede to thy wish. "Thou canst not see My face; for man shall not see Me and live."† By this, Almighty God did not simply mean to say, that man must die before he can enter into celestial glory, but also and especially, that the clear vision of God's holy countenance would infallibly deprive us of life. "He that is a searcher of majesty, shall be overwhelmed by glory,"‡ says the Scripture in another place. This, indeed, is not so very difficult to understand. Can any one pretend to put the ocean into a wine glass? All the happiness of eternity cannot find room in a poor little human heart, which however all the gratifications of the earth cannot satisfy. Just as a man cannot live but must infallibly die in extreme heat or cold, so, he cannot endure the superabundant joy that flows from the vision of God. We cannot, with unprotected eye, gaze on the midday sun, and not have our sight injured, perhaps destroyed—how then, can our eyes, how can our spirit look into the ocean of

*Exod. xxxiii., 13. † Exod. xxxiii., 20. ‡ Prov. xxv., 27.

light, of the Sanctity and Majesty and Beatitude of the Divine Essence without undergoing a great alteration : we cannot see God and live !

What then is to be done ? Shall we be deprived of the sight of God ? No, no ! Let us not be uneasy in this regard. We shall live and behold God's beatifying countenance. Omnipotence has discovered a means of showing us the splendor of his beauty, and of enabling us to behold his dazzling majesty not only without pain but with infinitely consoling, soothing delights, to enjoy, to possess with inexpressible satisfaction his boundless splendor and happiness for eternity.

Consider for a moment the human eye—how delicate, how weak, how easily injured ! how small, and yet how vast its comprehension ! It grasps every thing ! ! How does it happen that in the small space of our eye, at a single, instantaneous glance, Heaven and earth are reflected ? These are millions of times greater. How is it that we can see all that they contain ? This is owing to light, to a ray of the sun. In a similar manner a new, and as yet by man unseen, a supernatural light will enable our limited spirit, our restricted understanding to gaze in Heaven on the dazzling majesty of God, to comprehend and support the infinite joys of his Beatitude. This light we call the *Light of Glory*, and it is nothing else than a participation of that uncreated light in which God Himself dwells, in which

He sees and knows Himself, as we conclude from the words: "And the city" (heavenly Jerusalem) "hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it."* This too, the Royal Prophet means when he says: "For with Thee is the fountain of life; and in Thy light we shall see light."† By means of this supernatural light of glory with whose brightness God will fill our souls, the elect shall be so far elevated above their natural powers, that they can direct the eyes of their spirit to the very centre of all God's beauty and majesty, and unharmed by its flood of light, can look upon the eternal Divine Essence. By this light they will see every thing in God; strengthened by this light they shall be able to grasp and sustain for eternity the immense joys of the vision of God. This heavenly light in which we shall see God, is immeasurable, incorporal, indestructible, incomprehensible, imperishable, inextinguishable, increated, inaccessible; it is a Divine Light which illumines the eyes of Angels, which rejoices the youthful hearts of the Saints. How great then God is! how supremely surpassing must His beauty and happiness be, that, in order to make us capable of enjoying it, he must perform a miracle, create for us a new, supernatural means!! Thou truly sayest, O holy Augustine!

* Apoc xxi., 23. † Ps. xxxv., 10.

that it is only in the light of Glory, "in the vision of God, that we can find supreme good, supreme happiness, supreme joy, perfect love, true liberty, eternal security and secure eternity. There alone, can we hope for true gladness, fullness of beauty, complete wisdom and knowledge, and all delights. There alone, shall we find peace, goodness, strength, joy, sweetness, life, honor, praise, majesty, tranquillity, love, union of wills, and eternal, uninterupted pleasure."

The day will come when we shall see with our eyes what eye hath never beheld! O! how inexpressible the vision of God will be! When we see God, we shall forget all the beauty of the world, all the brilliancy of gold, all the charming beauty of the fields and the pomp of nature, the grandeur and wonders of the ocean and air; the brightness of the sun and stars. O vision of God, thou incomprehensible beauty, before Thee all earthly beauty, even the Angels in Heaven, nay the entire creation dwindle into insignificance! O, vision of God! whence all beauty, all happiness, every joy proceed as the stream from the perennial spring; to possess Thee, to dwell in Thee, is our vocation!

PART VIII.

Sources of Joy in Heaven.

THE VISION OF GOD.

So great, so incomprehensible is God's love for man, that it cannot be satisfied by bringing, for his sake, all creatures into existence out of nothing; by elevating him to the honor and dignity of king of the entire earth, and by creating for him the joys of Paradise. Something more, something greater must be done to satisfy this prodigious love. God assures us that, if we remain faithful to Him during the trials to which our liberty is subjected in this life, and if, with His grace, we die the death of the just, we shall receive, in Heaven, a reward so great, that He cannot give anything greater—for the Lord says: "I am thy reward exceeding great."*

Therefore, God, from whom all good proceeds, who infinitely surpasses all that does or can exist, and who is the living fountain of all happi-

*Gen. xv., 1.

ness, shall be our reward in Heaven. The vision of God is the essential happiness of all who enter the celestial Paradise. The great St. Thomas Aquinas says: "The happiness we find in the vision of God, is infinitely greater than all the true and all the false pleasures that exist, or that we can even imagine." All else we experience in Heaven, is accidental; the essence of true, complete beatitude consists in the vision of God. But in what this vision of God precisely consists, is, indeed, beyond the power of mortal lips to express. St. Paul himself tells us that being "caught up into Paradise; he heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter."*

Since we are now about to treat of Heaven in the light of Faith, let us apply to ourselves and to our subject, the words of the great African Bishop and Doctor, St. Augustine: "We are unable to treat becomingly, this grand subject, yet we dare not remain silent." Listen to the holy Scripture: should we one day have the unspeakable happiness of entering God's eternal kingdom, and should the eye of the spirit, by means of the light of Glory become capable of seeing God as the eternal, increated beauty, we shall no longer see God as we do now with the light of Faith, in a dark manner, as through a glass, but face to face, as He is in Himself.† He will reveal Himself to us, and we shall then see

* II. Cor. xii., 4. † I. Cor. xiii., 12.

verified the words recorded by St. John: "This is eternal life: that they know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."*

The vision of God, inasmuch as the light of Faith permits us to comprehend it, bestows on us a fourfold happiness. By it, we obtain a thorough knowledge of God, a complete resemblance to God, a perfect love of God, and an entire possession of God. Let us, by a few passing thoughts, endeavor to explain this great truth, to some extent at least. To see God is to know Him—to know Him is to see Him; now in Heaven we shall see God, not from afar off, as Moses from Mount Horeb saw the promised Land; not as when, from an elevated tower, we view the starry Heavens; not through the clouds and darkness of Faith; not by imagination and representation, as we see Him now in His own works, in nature, in the Scripture; not, as St. Paul says, through a veil of mysteries, as we see Him now in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar; not partially—no, no! rejoice, ye Christians; ye believing, loving souls, rejoice! we shall see Him, know Him just as He is in Himself. We shall then understand the greatness of dazzling majesty and glory; we shall know the eternal Father, the only begotten Son, the life-giving Spirit, the love of the

* St. John xvii., 3.

Trinity. All the wonderful attributes of God will appear to us as clear as the midday sun. We shall know all the treasures of His perfections; we shall know His beauty, ever old and ever new; His sanctity without parallel, His knowledge without limits, His omnipotence, His mercy without measure; His goodness without bounds; His truth, His greatness, His infinity, His eternity, His love, His incomprehensible all-comprehending, endless love! We shall see and understand in all their brightness the mysteries of Faith to which, here on earth, in obedience to God's truthful word, we subject our intellects and our wills; we shall know the wonders of creation, of Redemption, of the governing of the world, of God's all-directing Providence. We shall understand how God sought for, protected, favored every individual, and desired to lead all to eternal life. The history of the whole world and of every individual creature will be laid open before us; each one's most hidden qualities will become visible to us. We shall know what hell is which we have escaped, the terrible judgments of the Divine Justice, and each individual reprobate. Finally, in God we shall see Heaven and its splendor, Mary its Queen, all the Saints and Angels; in short, we shall see and know everything, according to the degree of Sanctity we have attained in this life. Our ability to see and know the infinite perfections of Heaven and of Heaven's

King, will depend on the degree of virtue we shall be found to possess at the moment of death. God is an infinite ocean of knowledge from which the soul can draw indefinitely; little, if poor and small in holiness; abundantly, if expanded by sanctity, and as it were, made capable of enjoying the beatifying knowledge spread out before it. We shall know all existences, for we shall see God. "What," exclaims St. Augustine: "What does not he see, who sees every thing in Him, who sees by excellence? If we see God, we see the heavenly joys, the joyful eternity, the eternal beatitude, the beatific Trinity, the triune Unity, and the one Divinity"—and the happy vision of the Divinity, is the joy of our Lord.

All this we shall know at once, at the very first moment that we behold the Divinity; and we shall continue to acquire greater and newer information, during the long interminable day of eternity. As a man, who, in the darkness of the night, enters one of the old Gothic Catholic Churches, sees nothing; yet, restrained by all he has heard of the beauty of the edifice, by his trust in the style of architecture, by his hopes of the bright visions of the delightful symmetry and ornaments, which the first beams of the morning light will disclose to him, he resigns himself to the disappointment of the night, and patiently awaits the first tints of the orient sun. His faith is rewarded; his hopes are realized.

Daylight reveals to him more than, in the obscurity of the night, his heated imagination had pictured to itself. He sees the splendor, the pomp, the majesty of the noble edifice erected to the most High. By its vastness, by its grandeur, by its symmetry, it is as nearly worthy of Him for whom it was intended, as anything that this world can furnish. The light streaming through the old stained windows supplies his eyes with grand and ever new sources of delight! Can we say: Thus it is in Heaven? Ah no! Heaven's joys, Heaven's surprises, Heaven's ecstasies are infinite!

St. Teresa very simply and very beautifully explains how it is possible for us, to see and to know, at the first glance at God's eternal Being, every single created being, each and every Angel and Saint of God (according, of course, to the degree our acquired sanctity, renders us capable of receiving Heaven's light into our souls.) She says, she represents to her imagination, Heaven and the vision of God, as an immense Hall at one end of which, stands a prodigiously large mirror, and around which, at various intervals, are arranged others, smaller and of ever varying sizes. Now, whoever looks into the large mirror sees not only the mirror and himself, but also at the same time, inasmuch as his eye is able to comprehend and discriminate, the Hall itself, all that is in the Hall, each smaller mirror and

every object reflected in each mirror. From this we can understand that, since christian virtue alone leads to the vision of God, it procures us true wisdom, and that by it and with it, we gain every thing. To this assertion, St. Gertrude bears ample testimony. She tells us that a sister of the order having died, appeared to her shortly after her death, and communicated to her wonderful information concerning the Glory of Heaven. "How comes it," asked the Saint: "that you, who, in this life, were one of the simplest, least intellectual of the sisters, should now possess such extraordinary knowledge?" "It suffices," was the answer, "to see God, a single moment, in order to know everything." We can also, in support of this great truth, evoke the words of St. Gregory, who asserts: "We must unhesitatingly believe that nothing outside of God, is hidden from the Saints, who behold God Himself."

How wonderful then, how clear, how great our knowledge will be, if we be blessed with God's beatific vision! Into what contemptible insignificance all human wisdom dwindles in presence of the knowledge of God!! A poor, unlettered, ignorant man who will have secured his salvation, shall possess a thousand times more knowledge than the proud doctor of sciences, whose name, though blazoned forth in every clime, is not written in the Book of Life. "If," says St.

Bonaventure: "noble minds feel themselves elevated, rejuvenated by Plato's knowledge, Cicero's eloquence, Solomon's wisdom; what will it be to share in the knowledge and wisdom of God, the only fountain of all wisdom, of all science, and of all knowledge!"

With this clear knowledge of God, is intimately and inseparably connected the second effect of the Beatific vision, namely: A complete resemblance to God. A poor laboring man sees, in this life, a rich king, a ruler of the world, and he remains in his wretched poverty as before. An ill-shaped man beholds a beautiful, ravishing form whose admirable symmetry throws him into ecstasies of delight, and he finds himself still deformed. This will not be the case with a beatified soul in Heaven. At the moment, that we shall see God, "when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is."* Nay! even more, according to the doctrine of St. Paul, who says, that "we all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord."† It requires great skill in a man to paint a true portrait of a person; and even when the artist has succeeded in placing on canvass the characteristic traits of the person's features, the painting is a cold, unmoving, lifeless thing. It

*I. John iii., 2. †II. Cor. iii., 18.

we look into a mirror, we see, in an instant, a most perfect image of ourselves—it is endowed with life and motion; but this appearance is unreal, it disappears as readily as it had appeared —we cannot touch it, love it, feel it—it is without substance.

How different, how infinitely different is the case with the vision of God! Here on earth, the Christian has before him the duty of transforming himself into an image of God. "For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His son."* This duty we must fulfill with great earnestness by imitating Jesus Christ during this life. Ah, how difficult, this is, and how imperfect our labor! But when, as a reward for our noble efforts, we shall have entered the kingdom of Heaven, in a moment, God will complete the resemblance of the image to Himself. "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is."† His brightness, His beauty, His nature will also be ours. When by virtue of this vision, a ray of the Divinity penetrates our souls, as light penetrates a pure crystal, we shall, as it were, be changed into Himself. As a drop of water let fall into a large vessel full of wine, is so mingled with the juice of the grape, that it can be called wine; as the glowing iron drawn from the furnace is said to

*Rom. viii., 29. †I. St. John iii., 2.

be, and has the properties of fire; so, without losing our own identity, we are as strictly, as intimately united with God by the beatific vision, as the drop of water with the wine, or the iron with the fire. And this transformation will not be simply apparent but real; it will not be merely transitory, but abiding, lasting, eternal even. "When," says St. Bernard: "I shall appear before the face of God, my human being will indeed remain, but it will assume another form, another manner of existing, another strength, another glory, another majesty." This resemblance to, this transformation into God, is, at the same time, our entrance into the joy of the Lord; I shall live no, not I—but God will live in me. He will live in my soul, in my understanding, in my memory, in my will, and after the resurrection, in my glorified body. According to my capability, depending on my degree of sanctity, I shall be beautiful, free, tranquil, immortal, happy with God; I shall live and reign with Him, for all eternity. From this union, flows that perfect love, which the Saints in Heaven, bear to the Almighty. "Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever."* It is only in Heaven we can in the full sense of the word exclaim: My Lord and my God! My God and my all. As soon as we shall have seen God, faith will disappear, hope will vanish, love alone

* Ps. 72, 26.

will remain. "O Love, O Love!" cries out the great St. Augustine: "O Love, O Love! thou art the sweetest feeling of the human heart! without thee, every good is bitterness of spirit, misery, and intolerable disgust. And yet, here on earth, thou art nothing else than a desire, a longing which shall here be never gratified! O sweet, enchanting pains! We rejoice in serving and in suffering! When, Oh! when shall we see the day that can soothe this yearning of our hearts, that shall gratify our desires, that shall realize our hopes? Not before we shall see Thee, O Lord! can we so love Thee, with our whole hearts, that they will not suffice for the greatness of our love; and therefore we shall rejoice that our whole hearts will not suffice for the greatness of our joy." The vision and knowledge of God, and our transmutation into Him whilst beatifying us, in so extraordinary a degree, will inflame us with grateful, holy, sweet, pure, tender, interior, glowing, eternal love for so good a Being. We shall be so thoroughly penetrated, seized and firmly grasped by this love, that we shall lose a portion of our freedom, and be under the sweet necessity of loving God above all things, of loving Him alone. "Love," says this same Holy Father, "is the air which the happy souls who see God will breathe; love is the spirit which will constitute their life; they will think of love, speak of love, live the life of

love; or more properly speaking, they will neither think, nor speak, nor live as we do; but they will only love God, and in return be loved by Him; and by this mutual love, they will reach the complete possession of their felicity, and become participators in all the goods of Heaven. The Lord says to each blessed soul: 'Thou art Mine and I am eternally thine. Ask what thou wilt—I will give thee all. I place thee over all my possessions Come, beloved spouse, enter into the joy of the Lord. All that is Mine is thine; rule, govern with Me. Enjoy, according to thy utmost capacity, the very same heavenly pleasures from which I derive my infinite happiness, I am myself thy exceeding great reward!'"

O Felicity of the Saints, how great thou art! O goodness of God, how infinite, and how incomprehensible thou art! The vision of God in Heaven, therefore, so imperfectly, so wretchedly explained, consists in perfectly knowing Him, perfectly loving Him, in possessing Him completely, in entire transformation into Him. Such is that happiness, that immeasurable, eternal glory of which one, who was ravished into Heaven, says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him*" Such is that beatitude whose measure is so full that nothing can be added to

I. Cor. ii., 9.

it ; such is that beatitude which the Holy Books designate as a "Hidden Treasure," a "precious stone," a "Crown ;" such is the beatitude which the Lord has promised to each of his faithful servants, saying : "I myself will be thy exceeding great reward."

OVERFLOW OF THE HEART.

Oh vision of God, unspeakable mystery ! What is man, O Lord, that Thou shouldst think of him ? Dust and ashes, answer the Patriarchs. What is life ? A mere passing breath of air, answer the Apostles. The whole universe is in the sight of God, a mere handful of dust ; even the earth in our solar system is the merest point. And amongst the various creatures dwelling on this our globe, how insignificant is the human race ! what could they all do, for example, against the sea ? And amongst the whole human family, what is my poor little person ? How insignificant, how contemptible am I, a poor, wicked powerless creature of God, in the immensity of space and time ! And yet, O God ! Thou hast, from all eternity, thought of my poor heart, into which Thou hast infused an insatiable longing after Thy love. The possession of the whole visible world were too little for my heart ; it

thirsts after an infinite good; my wish flies, as a fiery dart, in search of a desired but as yet unseen happiness. Only the vision and knowledge of the eternal, thrice Holy God can give peace to my heart, can quench my raging thirst after happiness, can calm my passionate desires for pleasure, can satiate my longing after enjoyment. To see Thee, O God! without veil; to love Thee without satiety; to praise Thee without fatigue; to possess Thee without fear of losing Thee, will be my portion for ever in Heaven!

After the combat of this life, after the victory achieved in death, the veil before God's sanctity will be torn away; time and eternity, and all they contain will be exposed to my eyes; the Divine mysteries and attributes will be disclosed to the inflamed desires of my heart; the countenance of the Most High will be revealed to my soul. Then, whilst contemplating the infinite beauty of the Deity, my understanding will sink, as it were, into a sea of increated light, my heart will banquet on the sweetness of infinite goodness, all the powers of my soul will, with unutterable delight, rest in God, and will be secure and happy in their eternal possession of Him. Then shall I understand how this life was only a fraction of life, mere vanity, a dream, a moment of trial—and how incomprehensible was my attachment to it! Like a traveler, who in the darkness of midnight, with no other light to

guide his steps than the dim flickering flame of a little lamp, passes through magnificent demains, ignorant of the beauteous scenery that his every step leaves behind, is astonished, bewildered, amazed at the unexpected view which the first tints of rosy morn present to his enchanted eyes, and which the beams of the risen sun color still more strongly and vividly. Thus shall it be with my heart, which, guided in the dark night of this life by no other light than that of a weak, obscure, though most undoubting Faith, will be inundated with delights, when the golden dawn of eternity announce the appearance of the Sun of Grace. What joy filled the heart of the traveler, when he beheld the splendid scenery with which he was surrounded, and which the darkness of the night had concealed from his view! And what will be my delight, when as it were, awaking from the deep sleep of this life, I shall behold, in the vision of God, that I have been raised to a grandeur, to a nobility, to an excellence I had never hoped for; that I have received a happiness, a beatitude I had never dreamed of; that I am truly an heir of Heaven, a coheir of Jesus Christ, a child of God, a companion of Saints and Angels for eternity! Then Faith shall be no more, hope shall be fulfilled, love alone remain! That craving of my heart whereby I am incessantly, irresistibly drawn to love some object, will at last be appeased! My

longing after truth, after peace and after beatitude, will forever and ever be satisfied! O happy, blessed hour that is to free me from the prison of this life! when shall I behold thee? When wilt thou lead me into the land of Promise, to the knowledge of the wonders of Heaven, to the glory of Paradise and to the vision of God?

JESUS IN HEAVEN.

"O that I could have seen Rome in all her splendor," exclaims St. Chrysostom: "O that I could have seen and heard St. Paul, as he preached to Jews and Gentiles; and O! that I could have seen Jesus as He lived and walked amongst men!" Should we ever have the happiness of reaching Heaven, we shall see infinitely more than this great Saint so ardently desired to behold! There we shall see the heavenly Rome, the city of God in all its splendor; the great Apostle St. Paul; all the choirs of Angels and Saints, and Jesus; not as he lived amongst men, meek, kind and good; but surrounded by unclouded majesty, seated on a throne of heavenly glory. After the vision of God, which discloses to us the essence of eternal beatitude, there is nothing in Heaven that can afford us such felicity, make us so happy as the sight of the beauty of the celestial glory

that surrounds our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Holy Scriptures say that He in whom the Divinity and humanity are united in one person, "is beautiful above the sons of men."* Philo, a Pagan, has left us a description of His person. If we bear in mind the impression which His personal appearance, His words, and His conduct made on those who, here on earth, had the happiness of seeing Him, we can form a pretty correct idea of his beauty and amiability. Tradition informs us that, whilst yet a boy, in the house of His Foster-father St. Joseph, His gentleness and kindness of heart produced such an effect on the minds of all, that it became a common thing amongst the troubled and afflicted to say: "I will go to see Jesus, Mary's Son." His very appearance eased the troubled, the broken heart, and banished all painful anxieties. "His countenance, His words, His whole being," as St. Bridget assures us, "possessed such a Divine charm, which beamed from His eyes, that He irresistibly drew all hearts to Himself." A single word from Him sufficed to make Peter and Andrew and the other Apostles renounce all they possessed and follow Him in poverty, in contempt, and in persecution. A look from His Divine eyes was able to make the fallen Peter shed tears of bitter sorrow, and to inflame with love the heart of the sinful Magdalen. His dis-

* Ps. xliv., 3.

ciples could not separate themselves from their beloved Master. When, on a certain occasion, He asked them: "Will you also go away?"* Peter answered in the name of the rest: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." On another occasion, St. Thomas† said: "Let us also go that we may die with Him."‡ How strong, how earnest was the attachment of His disciples to Him! What do I say? His disciples? His very enemies say: "Behold, the whole world is gone after Him."§ The people surrounded Him, never lost sight of Him; whithersoever He went, they followed Him, They went with Him up on the mountain, into the desert, to the sea-shore; they abandoned their ships, their boats, their houses, their works; they forgot to eat or drink, and for days and nights in succession they could not tear themselves away from his presence. Even pagans and unbelievers came to behold His Divine countenance, and said to Philip, one of the Disciples: "Sir, we would see Jesus."‖ Nothing could resist the wonderful sweetness of His disposition. The conversion of the adulteress, the raising to life of the young man of Naim, and of Lazarus; the oft-repeated promise of pardoning sins; the wonders of his compassion for the suffering and afflicted of all kinds; His every word, His every step, His

* St. John vi., 68. † Ibid. 69. ‡ St. John vi., 16.
§ St. John xii., 19. ‖ Ibid. 21.

every act were manifestations of His Divine amiability. And who, for the last eighteen hundred years could have looked on the image of the crucified, without feeling his heart inflamed with a strong desire, one day to see, face to face, Him whom he has been contemplating with the eyes of Faith ; to love and possess Him who loved us so much as to deliver Himself for us "unto death, even the death of the cross ?"*

What, then, shall be our happiness on beholding Jesus glorified, since, even surrounded as he was by so many afflictions, he was the delight of all that sought him ! On Mount Thabor, he disclosed for a moment to three beloved Apostles, the glory of his Divinity. His garments became as white as snow ; His countenance shone like the sun. Moses and Elias appeared and spoke with Him. The heavenly Father allowed His voice of love to be heard. Unable to endure the sight of His Majesty, His Apostles fell prostrate on the ground and were enveloped in a bright cloud. Delighted with the vision, St. Peter exclaimed : "Lord, it is good for us to be here ; let us make three tabernacles."† And after his resurrection what a flood of joy and heavenly peace his various apparitions poured into the hearts of all who saw Him ! Magdalen did not recognize Him, at His first appearance to her ; but the moment he called her by name, the moment she heard Him

* Phil. ii., 8. † Matt. xvii., 4.

pronounce the word Mary, she recognized the beloved voice of Jesus, and burst forth into exclamations of ecstasy, saying: "Rabboni!" and with all the ardor of a loving heart she wished to clasp His feet in her arms. When the doubting Thomas put his finger into the holes in our Lord's hands, and laid his hand on the wound of His side, with trembling heart he uttered the feeling words: "My Lord and my God!" And at that fleeting moment at which everything shall abandon us; when we must depart this life, we shall find no circumstance to tranquilize our troubled souls, to console our afflicted spirit, to fill us with joy and hope but the image of crucified Jesus, if, however, we bear him a believing love. Our eye will be directed toward His cross, our lips will kiss it, we shall press it to our hearts; His name will be our last sigh, the anchor of our hope. With Jesus in our hearts, Jesus on our lips, and with the image of Jesus in our hands, we shall confidently present ourselves before the tribunal where, for the first time, we shall see in His humanity, Him in whom we have believed, in whom we have hoped, whom we have loved above all, the son of God and Mary, whom the Father has made Judge of the living and of the dead, and who will receive his faithful servants into eternal life.

If, now, the very thought of Jesus' beauty and amiability possesses such a wonderful power of

making us happy and joyful, what shall it be when we shall see Him face to face, in His complete and glorified state, in the kingdom of Heaven, in His brilliant, dazzling majesty and glory? Theologians and doctors are not agreed about the question, whether in Heaven we shall see only with the eyes of the soul, the triune God, or whether the eye of the body, strengthened by the Light of Glory, will be capable of this vision. All the saints and doctors, however, concur in the doctrine, that in Heaven, after the vision of God Himself, which constitutes our essential beatitude, there will be no greater joy, no greater delight, no greater happiness, than that imparted by the sight, the knowledge and the love of Jesus. How rejoiced shall we be when we shall behold the kingdom of power and majesty which the eternal Father has prepared for His only begotten Son, who for us and for our salvation assumed human nature! What a source of joy will it be for us to see Jesus, the first-born of the children of men; and in His person, to behold our poor human nature elevated to and placed at the right hand of God! How great shall our joy be when, as St. Peter says, the day of the Lord, the day of the manifestation of Jesus Christ will have come! How great shall our joy be, when we shall know how Jesus, through His sufferings and death, has merited and acquired for us the right to the inheritance of the heavenly

kingdom ; how the love wherewith He effected the Redemption of man, the zeal, wherewith He procured such honor to God, are rewarded by the eternal Father with a glory, with a beatitude which is the wonder of His omnipotence and of His infiniteness! How we shall rejoice, when we shall see how all power in Heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus Christ, our Lord, our Master, our Saviour, our Brother ; how all His enemies will lie trembling at His feet ; how, at His holy Name, every knee in Heaven, on earth, and in hell shall bend ; how the Father has placed in His hands the keys of death and hell ; how He is the beginning and the end of all things ; the strength of God, and the Father of the life to come ; how all judgment is His, that He may be honored as the Father is! How we shall rejoice, when we shall see in all its evidence, the greatness of His love for us ; when we shall know and understand, how out of His humiliations, out of His sorrows, out of His wounds, out of His blood, have sprung mercy, grace and happiness. How we shall rejoice, when we shall behold His glorified wounds shine with a heavenly brilliancy seven times greater than the light of the sun ; when we shall know the excess of His love for us, how dearly He purchased us, how he had our names written in His hands, how He had given us His heart, and prepared for us this heavenly dwelling of eternal love! How we shall rejoice that we

have been so dearly loved by Jesus, and that we in return, love Him so sincerely! How we shall rejoice, when we shall see and know how Jesus has recovered with infinite profit all that, through love for us, He had lost! He who was in extreme poverty, is now rich, the master of the entire world! He who was despised, and looked upon as the reproach of men, insulted, trampled upon as a worm, is now crowned with honor and glory, is placed on a throne, at the right hand of the majesty of God! He who was abandoned by all is now the object of all love! He who was sad and sorrowful even unto death, is now filled with happiness, with inexpressible joy! He who was a man of sorrows besprinkled with blood, covered with wounds, is now all beautiful, all fair; His countenance beams as the sun, the fullness of the Divinity dwells in Him! He who died on the cross, is living, risen the first-born from amongst the dead, the conqueror of death, the king of life: and for eternal days, eternal glory shall radiate from His person. How we shall rejoice, when we shall behold Jesus so happy; when we shall feel ourselves so happy with Him; for it is infallibly true, that, if we suffer with Him we shall be glorified with Him :* "if we be dead with Him, we shall live also with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him."† "He will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of His glory."‡ In proportion as

* Rom. viii., 17. † II. Tim. ii., 11-12. ‡ Phil. iii., 21.

we, here on earth, have been companions and participators of His sufferings, of His combats, we shall in Heaven be participators and companions of His joys, of His happiness, of His victory and of His triumphs. Yes, the happiness of Jesus, the Head of the spiritual body whose members we are, will be our own happiness: we shall live and rule in Heaven, for Him, with Him, and through Him, for all eternity. Amen.

Oh! a heart that loves Jesus is able even here to understand in a certain degree, and to have a kind of foretaste of the joy and happiness that proceed from the sight and love of our dear Lord in Heaven. We shall, therefore, at the end of this little book, add a few traits from the lives of those Saints who were remarkable for their great love for Jesus Christ. But to omit nothing that can show the great joy we shall derive from beholding our Lord in Heaven, let us now, as we did in some preceding instances, open the Holy Scripture and hear what the inspired writers say on the subject. In the Apocalypse, under the image of the marriage feast of the Lamb with the Church, that is, the assembly of the Elect, St. John describes the Feast which God has prepared for the glory of His beloved Son Jesus in Heaven. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory to Him," writes the great St. John: "for the marriage of the Lamb is come."* Now when

*Apoc. xix., 7.

he undertakes to describe this heavenly wedding supper, this grand marriage banquet, he exerts himself to find words to delineate the joy and gladness of the heavenly festival which the eternal Father has prepared for His Divine Son, and for the human race as the children of Redemption. The glory of Jesus in Heaven will constitute, above all, the compensation and the reward for the love we bear Him, and the sacrifices we offer Him in this life. It will indeed be a reward worthy of the majesty of God, a reward that leaves nothing to be desired—nay, that surpasses every desire. The climax of His splendor, and the completion of all mysteries shall take place on the great day of the revelation of His glory, the day of Eternity. Jesus will be the object of adoration, of universal love; Angels shall desire to behold His face and shall be happy in beholding it. Hymns of joy and praise shall resound in thanksgiving to the Father, because, in accordance with justice, He has supremely honored His Son, the lamb that was slain and that has again returned to life. And an Angel's voice will cry out to the human family: "Blessed are they that are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb."* This Marriage Feast between Jesus and His Elect will be entirely Divine and indescribable. No one, not even the enraptured John, could picture the

*Apoc. xix., 9.

grandeur, the sumptuousness of this festive table. Everything there speaks joy. There is to be found all power, there all happiness. And the Blessed who rule with Christ, and are adorned with crowns, shall fall down before Him who is seated on the Throne, and they will take their crowns from their brows and lay them at the feet of the King of Glory; and, in all the jubilation of the heavenly Paradise, the celestial choirs will chant their song of praise: Alleluia "the Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and Divinity, and strength, and wisdom and honor, and glory and benediction."† Thou, alone, O Lord! art worthy to open the Book of Life, to disclose the great mystery which is the completion of all mysteries. In Thy name we have found salvation, through Thee, we have secured eternal life. Therefore honor and glory, and praise and thanksgiving to the Lamb who has offered himself to repair the outraged honor of the Father, for the salvation of His brethren! For, oh Jesus! by Thy blood, by Thy death, by the reconciliation Thou hast effected, we have reached the summit of happiness, which we are to possess eternally with Thee! It is even on this account, the Father has crowned Thee with authority over all creatures! Such is the idea of the glorious description which St. John gives, in the Apocalypse, of the celebration of the

† Apoc. v. 12.

heavenly Marriage Feast. He shows us that all the glory and joy of Heaven belong to Jesus, who repaired his Father's honor at his own expense, and that the Elect from all nations bear testimony that it is to His blood and sufferings they owe their salvation, their happiness.

MARY IN HEAVEN.

He who knows what it is to love a dear, good, and true mother; who knows the pain and the grief caused by a separation from her, can appreciate the joy experienced at seeing after a long absence, a kind and loving mother. Now, for one who has a tender affection for his dear mother, this joy is doubled, aye, becomes even tenfold greater, when at his return he finds in happiness, in abundance, and in contentment, the beloved parent whom he had left in want, in poverty, and in sufferings. This truth will be apparent to us when the happy moment arrives wherein we shall see Mary in Heaven It is well for us, who with our mothers' milk have imbibed a love for God's Mother who is also by special favor our Mother! Happy is it for us, favored Christians, that we have learned to know in this life, Mary's worth; that we endeavor to imitate the examples of the heroic virtues she has left us; that

our hearts cling to her with child-like affection; that we have a thousand times, during life, experienced the efficacy of her intercession, the protection of her power, the love of her maternal heart! Well for us is it, that Mary possesses our entire confidence, our most tender affection; Jesus alone holds a higher place than Mary in the Christian heart. But when the form of this world shall have passed away; when we shall have died the death of the Just; when we shall possess the kingdom of Heaven, then shall we see and indeed, for the first time, personally know this Mother of Mercy and of Grace. It will be a special, and certainly not one of our least joys in Heaven, to see Mary, there no longer indeed, as the handmaid of the Lord, as the poor, abandoned Mother of the crucified Saviour; but as the glorified Mother of the glorified Jesus, as the Queen of Heaven; to see her, face to face, speak with her, and be able to address her by the sweet name of Mother. Yes, the sight and the knowledge of Mary's Glory shall be a great, a truly beatifying joy for us. If it is true that no ear has heard, no eye has seen, no heart has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him; what a throne of glory must He not have erected for Mary, who loved Him more than all the Saints and Angels, and whom in return He loved more than He did all creatures together! Mary, who was found worthy

to become the Mother of God, who, in grace, virtue and merit, surpassed all men and Angels, was most surely raised by God above all the choirs of the celestial inhabitants. Her throne is next to that of God. "As the light of the sun surpasses the brightness of the stars, so the glory of the Mother of God surpasses that of all the Saints."* "And as the stars and moon, so to speak, disappear when the sun rises above the horizon, so will the heavenly light of Saints and Angels be, as it were, obscured by Mary's glory."† "And as the moon and planets give light only by reflecting the rays of the sun, so the Saints receive from the sight of Mary and the reflection of her glory an increase of joy and happiness."‡ Hence it is, according to the expressions of the holy Fathers, that joy and pleasure shall be the portion of those who, in the light of glory, behold Mary.

The beloved disciple, St John, describes in his Apocalypse, a great wonder in Heaven: "A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."§ Oh God! how insignificant this image is, in comparison with the reality! The crown which the eternal Father placed on the brow of His beloved daughter, which the Son of God placed on the brow of His beloved Mother, the crown with which the Holy Ghost decked His

* St. Basil. † St. Peter Damien. ‡ St. Bernadin. § Apoc. xii., 1.

beloved spouse, is incomparably superior to a crown of precious stones and of brilliant stars! What is the light of day to the Sun of Justice, whose beams environ Mary! Instead of the moon, all the Angels and Spirits of Heaven are at her feet; for her throne is more glorious, more elevated than that of the inflamed Cherub and the burning Seraph. Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father, Mary sits at the right hand of her Son. As here on earth, she was full of grace and blessed amongst women, so in Heaven she is full of glory and blessed among all the choirs of heavenly spirits who intone an eternal Alleluia, an eternal hymn of thanksgiving that they possess such a Queen, such a Mother.

Yet, O Mary! how cold and wretched are the words with which I try to express our joy and happiness at thy glory and beatitude in Heaven. Speak thou, to our hearts, O Holy Church, Teacher of wisdom! may thy language picture to us how beautiful, how happy, how amiable, how great, how elevated, how glorious Mary is in Heaven! What joy awaits those who shall, one day, behold her countenance; who shall repose on her Maternal heart; who shall participate in her heavenly joys! Methinks this wish has been accomplished when I meditate on the mysterious sense of that chaplet of flowers, the Church has woven for our Lady of Loretto. In this Litany, so renowned and so sweet, are gathered and ar-

ranged all the types and mysteries whose realization and explanation so elegantly and so truly describe Mary's entire excellence and glory. The better we understand it, the more clearly we shall see what Mary's greatness is, and what our happiness will be. The words of the Saints show how inflamed our hearts become with love to Mary, when we meditate the mysterious praise contained in this Litany. "Mother of God, Mother of Divine Grace, Admirable Mother—wise, prudent, amiable Virgin; Mirror of Justice, Ark of the Covenant, House of Gold, Morning Star . ." What pictures! what mysteries! what indications of Mary's unspeakable glory and beatitude in Heaven!*

Yes; if we remain faithful to God's grace, we shall clearly and distinctly understand what God's holy Spirit has revealed about Mary. We shall mingle with the multitude of the Blessed, and, in unison with them, intone a hymn of praise to her. "Hail to thee, Mary!" the virgins will cry out, "we are Queens of Heaven, but thou art our Queen; for thou wast the first to give us an example of consecrating our Virginity to God; thou, O Virgin most pure! hast given to us our immortal spouse." "Hail to thee, Mary!" the confessors will exclaim, "thou art our Queen; thy example has taught us all

* See the little devotional Book, called: "Maria auf dem Himmelsthrone."

those virtues by the practice of which, we have merited the possession of Heaven." "Hail to thee, Mary!" the Martyrs will exclaim—"thou art our Queen, thy heroism in suffering has given us strength to die for the Faith and to purchase Heaven—not too dearly—by our warmest heart's blood." "Hail to thee, Mary!" the Apostles, the Prophets, the Patriarchs, all the Saints and Angelic choirs will exclaim—"thou art our Queen, the Mother of our King; thou art blessed among women; thou art full of grace; thou art the Saint of Saints; thou art the beloved of God, thou art immaculate, thou art the most beautiful of all creatures! Thou art the joy of our Heaven, the honor of us all, the glory of Paradise; thou art our Lady, thou art, and ever wilt be our Mother, Mary!"

SOCIETY IN HEAVEN.

An upright, noble, and true friendship sweetens all the bitter circumstances with which this life is beset. A true, sincere friend can make one really happy on earth. The Holy Scripture itself says: "A faithful friend is a strong defence: and he that hath found him, hath found a treasure. Nothing can be compared to a faithful friend, and no weight of gold and silver is

able to countervail the goodness of his fidelity. A faithful friend is the medicine of life and immortality."* Intercourse and friendship with noble, intellectual and amiable men has something so attractive in it, that St. Augustine, before he had consecrated his heart entirely to the love of God, thought it impossible to live without friends. "My heart," he writes in his *Confessions*, "sought an object on which I could bestow my love; it was so sweet for me to love and to be loved." Yes, the longing after love, after friendly intercourse and society, is so deeply seated, so firmly rooted in our hearts, that cut off from all sympathy, left entirely to ourselves, abandoned by all, we cannot be happy. A sumptuously set table loses all its attractions for one who sits down alone to it. A royal palace becomes a desert to one who is obliged to dwell alone in it. Separation from human society is a terrific punishment. Solitary confinement in prisons and dungeons throws a man into despair—nay, not unfrequently leads to suicide. But now, where and when, can we find, in this life, a truly faithful friend, sympathizing society? A mere oversight suffices to snap the bonds of a friendship of many years' standing, to cool the ardor of man's most ardent love. It is still more difficult to find a numerous society in which lasting affection, harmony, happiness, peace and union hold sway.

* Eccli. vi., 14-16.

The causes of all this are the defects, faults and passions of men. How, indeed, could it be possible that the lowly and the great, the ignorant and the instructed, the noble and the base, the pious and the wicked, the pure and the impure, the virtuous and the envious, the avaricious and those given to uncontrolled anger, should all be united in one and the same society, should be of one heart and one mind? Besides the great discrepancy of views and characters, there is still another disturber of peace in the world; it is found in every society, frequently even, in the same family, between brothers and sisters; I mean self-love; "the cold words mine and thine" as St. Chrysostom says: "whereby we make the place allotted to each in this world, too small for him."

But now let us raise our eyes to Heaven, and contemplate the community of spirits dwelling therein, and we shall immediately experience what this same holy doctor says: that no one in this life can form any thing like a just conception of the greatness, of the happiness, of the sweetness of the joy of those who hear the hymns of praise the Angels sing, and who have been admitted into the society of the Blessed. The chief of this society is Jesus, the King of Eternity, the King of Immortality, the King of Glory. Next to Him is Mary, Heaven's lovely Queen. Before God's throne stand the seven Princes of Heaven:

Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Sealtiel, Barachiel, Jehudiel.* The Angels, the heavenly Spirits, the immense multitude of Saints and Elect surround the throne of the Most High. These pure spirits, divided into nine different choirs, namely; Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Powers, Dominations, Virtues, Principalities, Cherubim, and Seraphim, surpass in beauty and in majesty, and in number, all that the most lively fancy can picture to itself. "Is there any numbering of his soldiers?"† Daniel says: "Thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him."‡ And around God's throne, which the brilliancy of the rain-bow, as the sign of peace, environs, stand four and twenty other thrones, on which are seated as many Ancients clothed in white garments and wearing golden crowns on their brows. And the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Apostles, the Martyrs, the Confessors, the Virgins and the other innumerable Elect of God form the imperial court of Heaven's Ruler. And this heavenly society, the most beautiful, the most choice, the most numerous that can exist, is composed of kings and queens of purest blood. What Jeremias said of Jerusalem will be fulfilled in a special manner in the city of God: "There shall enter by the gates, kings and princes sitting upon the

* The Church recognizes the names of only the first three.

† Job. xxv., 3. ‡ Dan. vii., 10.

throne of David."* St. John, in the Apocalypse, says that those who serve God shall rule with Him, shall wear crowns on their brows and bear palms in their hands. And St Bonaventure remarks the "Blessed shall receive royal crowns from the hands of the celestial Emperor."

Since all the Blessed are members of one body whose head is Christ, the King of Kings, every individual in Heaven, will share in the authority and the crown of Christ. All the holy, wise and virtuous men, who have ever lived on earth, constitute the heavenly society in whose members the all-seeing eye of God Himself cannot discover any imperfection. There, no one will injure the other; there, anger can never enter; there, no one is jealous of another's happiness; there, we shall find no opposition to our wills, no division of opinions; there, no one will suffer from passionate and unsubmissive desires. The entire assembly, oh, Beatitude! oh, Paradise! will be composed of none others than God's own holy friends, all of whom by the vision of God, are endowed with the highest wisdom, adorned with every virtue, freed from all evil inclinations, secured against all error; they are united with each other in so friendly, so confiding, so perfect a love, and rejoice in their God, with such conformity of wills and hearts, that the immensity of the multitude causes no disorder; their beauty and their majesty

*Jer. xvii., 25.

produce no pride ; their personal distinctions cause no envy or jealousy, or disturb the tranquillity of their minds.

The heavenly glory suffices for all. All are supremely satisfied and contented; each possesses as much as he wishes, or is able to receive. God is all in all ; and because each of the Blessed possesses God entirely, each has all in God. From this, it follows, that an eternal, unbroken peace will reign in this blessed society. "My people shall sit, in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest."* This heavenly peace will arise from the tranquil possession of God, from love which unites most intimately all with one another and with God. They will, as the Apostle expresses it, be the living stones which love unites and erects into one vast temple in which God will eternally dwell. Each of the happy inhabitants of Heaven will know all the others, and in return will be known by all ; each will love all the others, and in return will be loved by them. The hearts, the feelings, the desires, the wishes, the happiness of the Saints will be mutually unveiled and manifested. All live by one spirit, all are penetrated with the spirit of God, and all will rejoice in an eternal union of hearts and sentiments, in eternal repose of soul and body ; all will be of one heart and one soul, as was the case with the first Christians, who

*Isaiah xxxii., 18.

" were of one heart and one soul."* If, here on earth, where no one is without faults, we find ourselves happy in the presence, in the society, in the friendship, and in the love of a dear friend, a kind mother, a noble husband, or a faithful wife ; what must be the happiness that awaits us in the society of Heaven ! If in this life, alone, abandoned by all, a stranger to the sympathy and compassion of my fellow-beings, I pass my days in the privation of every earthly affection ; if, in obedience to the promptings of faith, I have offered all to Jesus, how great shall my joy be when in Heaven I shall see all rewarded a million times over ; when I shall see myself surrounded by as many friends and brothers, as many loving hearts as there are Saints and Angels and celestial spirits ! Who can express the happiness felt at being suddenly transported into the midst of many millions of the most noble beings, who know me, and who love me with their whole hearts? Who can express the happiness experienced by the Elect, when, in pure, spiritual love, (for all that is earthly shall have passed away), they will meet and rejoice in their mutual happiness ? Who can describe the happiness of the Blessed, when, in the most intimate union of love, they relate to each other the wonders of God's mercy ; when, in concert of many voices, and with one heart, they intone the hymn of Praise :

* Acts iv., 32.

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory to God: for the marriage of the Lamb is come!"* "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord: they shall praise Thee forever and ever."†

LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY IN HEAVEN.

"Peace, peace," says the Prophet, "and there is no peace." In like manner we cry out: "Liberty, liberty, and there is no liberty." Complete freedom, as men think, consists in this, that we are subject to no yoke, to no service, to no obligation, to no oppression, to no law, to no will but our own; that, on the contrary, we can think, speak and act as we will; that we are confined to no place, to no time, to no occupation; but that our will is accomplished in all things, at all times, in every place. Now, I would ask, does there, or can there exist, such liberty in the world? The history of centuries past, as well as of the present time, gives a most positive, a most unmistakable answer. Nations tear themselves loose from their Princes, and refuse to acknowledge their temporal authority. Republicanism is the symbol of liberty. The people elect their Representatives. The press is without restriction. People boast of having snapped the ties of religion, of that noble

* Apoc. xix., 7. — † Ps. lxxxiii., 5.

old religion which maintains that she alone is true, she alone is holy. Truth and error stand now on an equality; every one can believe what he likes. Has man thus attained a state of perfect liberty? Formerly people obeyed the will of one who, according to the obligations of his state of life, was the Father of his subjects; now they obey the wills of seven hundred, each of whom has his own peculiar little interest to look after. And are even these Representatives of the people free? Must not even they bow their wills and judgments most submissively, with all deference and humility, when the opposition carry their views by a majority of even one voice? Are the people now free from passions, from taxes, from oppressive laws, from the yoke of poverty, of necessity, of want? Is there no more death, no account to be given of our actions, no eternal reward, no God, no more truth? Can we now believe, think, speak, write, act as we list? Do not Switzerland, France, Italy, Germany, furnish tangible proofs that the oppression exercised by a false Democracy over the weaker party, is supremely painful, intolerant; that their despotism is most unjust, most cruel? The only rational liberty we find, here on earth, is the liberty of the Gospel. Christianity is not so narrow-minded that it can confine itself to one nation, or to a people of one form of government. The Catholic Church extends the arms of its love to all men; she em-

braces all times, all races, and all nations whether their form of government be a limited or a constitutional Monarchy, a Republic, or anything else you wish. It is a society "where there is neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond or free; but Christ is all and in all"*—all have been redeemed by Christ, all through the redemption must put on the new man. All must be formed after the image of Him "who is the first-born from the dead,"† who hath called us as a chosen generation, a kingly Priesthood, a holy nation out of darkness into marvellous light,‡ out of the slavery of sin into the freedom of the children of God. Indeed, we Christians, whilst we live in the flesh, are unavoidably, of necessity subjects to a higher Power;§ our bodies stand subject to the power of death, our souls under the authority of the law. The people are subject to the powers that are, and cannot resist them, else they resist the ordinance of God.‖ "In like manner, young men be subject to the ancients,"¶ "Wives to your husbands,"** and "servants to your masters."†† The sinner is the slave of sin,‡‡ the impious man the child of satan.§§ Those who live in error and the gratifications of the flesh, promise us indeed liber-

* Col. iii., 11.
† Ibid. i., 18.
‡ I. Peter ii., 9.
§ Rom. xiii., 5.
‖ Ibid. xiii., 2.
¶ I. Peter v., 5.
** I. Peter iii., 1.
†† I. Peter ii, 18.
‡‡ John viii., 34.
§§ Ibid. viii., 44.

ty; but how can they give it? "They are themselves the slaves of corruption. For by whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave."* But Jesus, despoiling the powers of darkness, placed us in liberty secure.† "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."‡ "If, then, the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."§ "If you continue in my word you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,"‖ and you shall find that freedom "wherewith Christ has made us free."¶ "For you Brethren, have been called unto liberty: only make not liberty an occasion to the flesh, but by charity of the spirit serve one another."** "For so is the will of God, that by doing well you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not as making liberty a cloak for malice, but as the servants of God."††

Nothwithstanding the fair appearance and the elevated nature of this liberty of the Gospel, it remains still true that, during our pilgrimage through this life, we shall never be able to taste the sweets of an unconditioned, unlimited freedom. The citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem are alone in possession of complete, perfect, untrammeled liberty There, we shall be free from the slavery of hell and sin. There, the yoke of

*II. Pet. ii., 19. †I. Col. ii., 15. ‡II. Cor. iii., 17.
§St. John viii., 36. ‖Ibid. viii., 31-32. ¶Gal. iv., 31.
**Ibid. v., 13. ††I. Pet. ii., 15-16.

our passions will have been cast away, the power of death annihilated. There, we shall not feel the depression of poverty, we shall not have to contend against the persistent and violent attacks of sensuality, we shall suffer from none of the necessities of human nature. We shall not be subject to the will of another, we shall be restrained by the prohibitions of no law. No difference of opinions, no opposition of views can circumscribe our wills, or restrict our intercourse. No longer confined to a little sod of earth, we claim the entire Heavens as our own. Once with God, bound to one body with Jesus Christ, we shall all partake of His universal authority. All that is in accordance with our wishes will take place ; anything opposed to them cannot happen. "Each and every blessed soul will be truly gifted with royal dignity, honors and authority ; and every individual, united with God, will form only one king. Thus the wills of all will constitute but one will ; what one wills all will, and what all will, shall infallibly be. They shall be almighty by their wills as God is Almighty by His will."* Oh ! happy, complete freedom of the children of God ! To deserve thee, to secure thee, it is well worth my while to bear, during the short space of my earthly life, the yoke of Faith, the burden of the law ! If, in this life, we are like Jesus, obedient to the will of the Father,

*St. Anselm.

obedient unto death ; nay ! if, in order to be victorious in the war which we are obliged to wage for the possession of eternal glory, we do not hesitate to be obedient, even to the death of the cross ; if we do not permit the false glare of error and apparent and deceitful freedom to dazzle us and decoy us into the way whose end is death, eternal slavery and certain loss of everlasting liberty ; we shall, with Jesus, once we are immortal, possess the unbounded freedom of the kingdom of God. All that we have said about *Liberty*, is, in like manner, true of *Equality*.

Equality of rights, equality before the law, does not, in this life, do away with the distinctions that arise from the various states of life, from rich inheritances, from property, from success in worldly pursuits. Can a perfect equality exist in this life ? By no means. When we see some miserably poor, others excessively rich ; some incomprehensibly ignorant, others highly instructed ; some masters, others servants ; some unhappy and abandoned by all, others in the enjoyment of friends and of the honors of this life ; how can we speak about *Equality ?* And indeed, if the poor were to murder the rich, and distribute their goods amongst themselves ; if no one were willing to serve, no one were to consent to work ; if the children were to refuse to submit to their parents, wives to their husbands, inferiors to superiors ; how could quiet, peace and order

exist with such false and absurd equality? Equality, then, at least in this life, is an idle dream, an empty, unmeaning word.

In Heaven alone can we expect to find real, true, just, rightful equality. No doubt, in the distribution of the Beatitude of Paradise, there will be an endless difference; for each one receives his reward according to his merit. Now, as in this world, we find that no two persons so perfectly resemble one another in external appearance, that, at least, their intimate friends cannot distinguish them; so in Heaven the infinite differences of merits and rewards will be an astounding proof of the Divine power and perfections. Yet true, real equality is to be found in the kingdom of God. All shall see God, and by His love and the possession of Him, all shall be perfectly happy. All shall be children, friends, heirs of God and co-heirs of Jesus Christ. All shall be so thoroughly satiated with the happiness of Heaven that they can neither desire nor enjoy a greater happiness. The inequality arising from their various degrees of glory will cause no regret, no sadness, no jealousy; on the contrary, each one will be perfectly contented, entirely satisfied. No one will envy another, no one would exchange with another. Every one in Heaven is in the right place, in perfect order, in just equality with the others. St. Francis of Sales explains this by a very pretty comparison. "A Father

has two sons, one is a small boy, the other a grown up youth, tall perhaps for his age. As a proof of his paternal love, the father orders a magnificent suit of precisely the same cut and of the same rich material for his two boys. Both are equally satisfied, both have received the same mark of the father's favor. But can we deny that the grown up youth has received more of the rich, precious material from which the suits were made, than the small boy? Is not the larger suit more valuable in itself than the smaller one? Yet ask these boys to exchange suits—they would not do it, each would keep his own; it is just what he likes, what he wants, what fits." The family table offers a similar comparison. All the guests partake of the same meats, drink of the same wine; yet all do not consume the same quantity; some take more, others less; all however partake abundantly of the same meat, of the same drink; all are completely satisfied. No one envies the others; on the contrary, if a beloved brother, a dear friend should take more than we are able to take, we rejoice at it, and do not regret that our stomachs are not more capacious. Thus will it be in Heaven. The Blessed will all be robed in garments of the same rich stuff, the garment of Divine glory, but still according to each one's degree of merit, to each one's size and capacity. Thus, too, the Blessed will all sit down to the

same wedding feast, enjoy the same table, in a greater or less quantity, according to each one's capacity ; that is to say—all will see God, love God, possess God ; all will be His beloved children ; all will be equally, that is, perfectly happy, and completely satisfied with the joys of Heaven. Therefore, in our future country with full Liberty we shall find rightful Equality, and moreover true *Fraternity*.

The French nation whose hearts, according to the expression of the renowned Father McCarthy, are naturally Catholic, adopted, on the establishment of the last Republic, the word *Fraternity* as their motto. There are, no doubt, many to whom it has never occurred that this word is also the motto of Christianity. The law of love is the Christian law. Love God above all things, and thy neighbor as thyself; do nothing, therefore, to another, which thou wouldst not wish to be done to thyself. This is true Fraternity ; this mutual love was the distinguishing mark of the first Christians ; it is even to-day the seal of true, living Christianity. But has it been realized on earth ? Are at least the thirty-four millions who adopted this motto, who ever have it on their tongues, bound together in love sincerely, in heart and in deed as true brothers ? What a melancholy answer the history of the past and the state of the present give to this question ! No, no ! outside the little circle of truly holy

Christians, Fraternity can be found only in Heaven, where one loves another as himself, where each one rejoices at the happiness of another as his own. The degree of Beatitude we do not ourselves possess, becomes ours by the satisfaction we feel at seeing our brothers enjoy it. "The love of the Elect for each other, will be so great, so perfect, that each will rejoice as much, at the glory, at the happiness of a brother or sister in Heaven, as though it were the reward of his own merit."* Now since the Saints in Heaven are almost innumerable, and since each perfectly knows, and ardently and sincerely loves all the others, every blessed soul will, according to the expression of St. Augustine, possess Heaven as many times over as he has companions and brothers of his happiness. "There, the glory of each individual will be the cause of common rejoicing, of universal joy."† Among the members of the heavenly city, there exists as strict, as close a union, as between the members of our bodies. In Heaven, the Virgins will rejoice at the merits acquired by holy widows, and widows will rejoice at the special privileges of holy, pure Virginity; the confessors will express their joy at the triumph of the martyrs, and the martyrs will exult at the crowns of honor won by the confessors; the Prophets will praise the holy lives of the Patriarchs, and

* St. Anselm. † St. Bruno.

these, the Faith of the Prophets; the Apostles and Angels will rejoice at the merits of the subordinate choirs, and these will rejoice at the glory and crowns of those of a superior order. All are called, and are, in fact, the brothers of Jesus, the children of God.* The inheritance of God, and joint inheritance of Jesus Christ will not be diminished by the number of heirs and brothers; it will be as great for the many as for the few, as great for one as for all. Impressed with these thoughts, St. Augustine exclaims: "In Heaven, every one of the Elect will differ in his degree of glory from all the rest, but joy and happiness are common to all; for love rules amongst them in all its perfection, in its entire completion. God will be all in all to them; Him they will eternally behold, eternally love with an inflamed love. Yes; they will eternally love Him, and, in songs of praise, celebrate his glory; they will, in songs of praise eternally celebrate His glory and love Him; their entire, constant occupation will be to praise, thank, glorify God without fatigue, without interruption, without end. Within God's eternal dominion, there is for Angels and men but one language, one joy, one pleasure, one feast, one happiness."

Rejoice then, and be glad, ye friends of Republicanism and of true Democracy. What you, in vain, seek here on earth, you shall find in

*I. John iii., 1.

Heaven, provided you do not live the life and die the death of unbelievers and of heathens, but live and die Christians and children of God. There, and there alone, you shall find complete Liberty, just Equality, and true Fraternity.

THE PLEASURES OF THE SENSES IN HEAVEN.

The complete happiness of the Saints in Heaven, will be, as we have already seen, the vision, the knowledge, the love and the possession of God. The essential happiness all the Blessed possess; and by enjoying the supreme, eternal good, all are infinitely happy. But now, to give us a superabundance of Beatitude, Almighty God works a new wonder. By His omnipotent power, and through His unlimited goodness, God has so ordained that, whilst we shall be absorbed in the vision of Himself, our souls and bodies shall experience all the sweetness, all the pleasures which, the degree of merit acquired on earth, will have rendered them capable of enjoying. And indeed, to speak at present only of the pleasures of the senses ; it is consonant with divine justice and liberality, that our bodies, which here on earth have endured so many pains, have fought so many battles, have overcome so many temptations, have conquered so many enemies, shall, on the day of

general retribution, also have their share in the honors of the battle they helped to win, in the victory they helped to gain, in the beatitude they helped to secure. The mystery of the resurrection, the glorifying of our bodies into new men, evidently prove that unspeakable pleasures for the senses await us in Heaven. For, as the vindictive justice of God has prepared, in hell, for the bodies of the damned, eternal torments, eternal pains, eternal stench, eternal darkness, eternal bitterness, and eternal fire; so can the bodies of the Blessed expect in Heaven, eternal sweetness, eternal perfumes, eternal beauty, and eternal happiness. And, although we can, at present, form to ourselves but limited, sensible ideas of the joys that will be ours in Heaven, yet they will be quite different from the sensual pleasures we can here enjoy. There all will be enobled, sanctified, holy and spiritual; yet we can readily understand that the very greatness of the pleasures reserved for our senses in Heaven, will, as it were, inebriate us with delights. Like one who, born blind, up to the present instant has had no idea of the beauty of light, of the sun, of the starry Heavens and of nature, and who, on a sudden, finding his eyes opened and gifted with sight for the first time, beholds the grandeur, the majesty of the world, would, in an ecstasy of joy, exclaim: "This, then, is the light of day, the brilliancy of the sun, the beauty of color and of nature! Oh,

how very different from the reality have I pictured all this to myself! how far does it surpass all my expectations!" Thus, a similar but infinitely greater ecstasy will ravish the happy being on whose eyes the glory of Heaven will suddenly burst. We shall behold the city of God, in the brilliancy of its precious stones, of its pearls, and of its transparent gold. We shall behold the innumerable multitude of Saints, of Angels, of heavenly spirits, each of whom shines like the sun, in heavenly beauty.

The Holy Scripture says of the Patriarch Jacob, that he was so charmed with Rachel's beauty, that in order to gain her hand, he served her father, Laban, fourteen years. The Holy Scripture says of the widow Judith, that her beauty was so great that the eyes of Holofernes' soldiers, who saw her, were ready to start from their sockets, and even Holofernes himself was charmed by a mere glance of her beautiful eyes. Now, if a human form which, like a flower buds forth in the morning, and fades away in the evening; if an earthly beauty, which in a short time is dissolved into corruption and clay, and changed into a terrific skeleton of death; if such an object exercises so great a power over the human heart, how great shall our happiness be, when our eyes shall behold in Heaven so many millions of those most noble, most beautiful spirits that shine in the golden light of the Divinity; when they shall

behold the glorified bodies of the Blessed! What pleasure, what inexpressible gratification will it not be for them to see the dazzling robe of innocence, which no sin has ever stained; the lily of purity, which no breath of the world has ever touched; the glorious palms of the martyrs whom no violence of the persecutors could subdue! What happiness for the tender mother to see her beloved child glorified and honored; for the loving wife to see her faithful husband; for us all, to see our brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, shining in the brilliant light of Heaven! Who can express the happiness we shall experience, when our eyes shall behold all the noble men and women who have ever lived, all the virtuous Christians of every race and nation, all the saints we have honored and loved, all the resplendent angels and blessed spirits that hold themselves in constant readiness to accomplish God's holy will! Who can describe the exquisite satisfaction we shall feel, when we shall intimately know and ardently love each and every individual of Heaven's beatified inhabitants, and, in return, be known and loved by them. Oh! how great my joy will be when I shall behold the most beautiful of all creatures, the Queen of Angels, the Lady of the world, the Virgin Mother of God! When I shall behold thee, O Mary! for the first time; not, indeed, for a period, but to see thee, to admire thee, to know thee, to

love thee for ever and ever, and be known and loved by thee for eternity! How gladdened our eyes will be when, for the first time, they will behold Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master, our King, our Brother, and our Saviour; when we shall know and love Him in His Divinity and most holy Humanity for ever and ever! When we shall see His noble countenance, the dazzling brilliancy of His sacred wounds, His love-inflamed heart! Were there no other gratification in Heaven than the pleasure derived from the sense of sight, would it not be worth all our efforts and every sacrifice to secure it?

Besides this joy given to the eye, the ear is also to be regaled in Heaven; for we shall there hear the eternal hymn of praise intoned by celestial voices. If it is so sweet, so agreeable for the ear to listen to the sound of gifted, well-trained human voices; to hear the warbling of little birds, the harmonious blending of many voices or instruments, what shall our joy be when our ears will hear the concert of heavenly voices, the voice of God Himself, who is the supreme, the unutterable Good, the source, the harmony, the origin of all music. And I heard a voice, says St. John in the Apocalypse, as the voice of many waters, the voice of innumerable angels around the throne of God, and their number was thousands of thousands, and the voice which I heard was the voice of harpers and heavenly music. And they sang

a new canticle, and the heavenly choir answered Alleluia! And from the rising to the setting sun the celestial vaults resounded with the great, eternal Alleluia, which the multitude of the Saints intoned.*

O God! what music, what voices, what melody, will resound for all eternity, before Thy throne! How our hearts will rejoice, when we shall hear these songs of jubilation in praise and thanksgiving for Thy greatness, Thy power, and Thy mercy! What happiness, when we too shall be allowed to unite our voices with the heavenly choirs in singing: Amen. Benediction, and power, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and glory, and strength, be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!

In like manner, although the Holy Scriptures say very little about it, our other senses will find complete satisfaction from the perpetual stream of celestial pleasures, and will be inebriated with the superabundance of the house of God. "Thy Saints, O Lord!" sings the Church, "will be in Thy presence as the fragrance of balsam." And Christ says to His disciples: I prepare a kingdom for you as my Father has prepared for me. All shall sit down in this kingdom, and, indeed, blessed is he that shall eat bread in God's kingdom.† "I dispose to you as my Father hath disposed to me a kingdom: that you may

* The sense of chs. xiv., xix.

† Sense of St. John xiv., St. Luke xiii., 29, xiv., 15.

eat and drink at my table in my kingdom."* Now although our glorified bodies can no longer use an earthly food, and although after the resurrection, we shall not be sensual in our propensities, but like the Angels of God, spiritual; yet it is infallibly certain, that all our senses shall be satisfied with pure, holy, heavenly joys and pleasures, an idea of which we can form from the properties of a glorified body. And in proportion as we, here on earth, mortify and sanctify one or another, of our senses or all of them, we shall feel its pleasure and its glory increased in Heaven; so, on the other hand, the more one has abused any one of his senses by desecrating it, by employing it to offend Almighty God, the severer, the more terrible, according to the Holy Scripture, shall be the eternal punishment of that sense. A pious Virgin, whose wonderful life has been written by a most distinguished master of the spiritual life, was extremely anxious about the fate of a man who had ended on the scaffold, a life of sin and crime. Some considerable time after his just but melancholy death, this man clothed in a snow-white garment appeared, one night, to her in a dream. The garment was indeed torn in several places, but the rents were ornamented with gold and precious stones, and on his neck was a pretty chain of costly material. The dream is easily explained. The white gar-

* St. Luke xxii., 29-30.

ment indicates the baptismal robe; the rents, the results of sin; the ornaments which repaired the damage were the works of penance he had performed; and because this man had offered to God as an atonement, and in a spirit of love the pain which he endured in his execution, his neck was decorated with a magnificent chain.

Another Virgin, but also a foolish, an entirely worldly minded girl, a short time before her death, asked the Priest who had come to administer the rites of the dying to her: "Is dancing among the pleasures of Heaven? shall I find there this gratification of which I am so passionately fond?" What answer could be given to such a question? Look at a little boy mounting a stick as a charger which he manages with consummate skill, and cares for, with as much anxiety as if it were living, is he not happy? See a little girl fondling her doll with all the affection of a mother, is she not happy? Now should the boy become a man and be charged with the guiding of the ship of State, or should the girl become a Queen, do you think the one would care about the stick or the other about the doll? St. Paul says: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child,"* that is to say: I spoke, thought and judged as a man.

*I. Cor. xiii., 11.

THE JOYS OF THE SOUL IN HEAVEN.

He alone who has experienced it, can tell us how sweet the visitations of the Lord are; with what inexpressible delights a soul is filled that has had the happiness of tasting them. St. Bernard relates of himself: "Once has it happened to me, O good Jesus! that I had the pleasure of tasting Thee; and would to God, that even at the cost of, if it were possible, a thousand deaths, I could have the happiness of again tasting Thee! If this joy of the soul is so great even now when in the pilgrimage of this life, only a drop of heavenly sweetness is poured into the soul, what will it be in Heaven, where we shall be, as it were, flooded with God's happiness, God's pleasures, God's delights!"

Though it should not be given to us as it was to St. Bernard, to have this sensible foretaste of Heaven's joys, yet our understanding guided by the light of Faith, suffices to furnish us with strong motives to desire the pleasures that await the soul in the future life.

The human intellect thirsts after knowledge, just as the human heart sighs for love. This desire can be gratified only in Heaven. "Here on earth all is false; in Heaven alone, every thing is true. Woe to me, that I sought truth, not in God, but in creatures! All here on earth

is vanity and deception, and, what is most melancholy, the degraded human heart rejoices in error and finds no pain in misery. No, no! a contented, happy life is not to be looked for in the kingdom of death. Where all is image and shadow, we cannot expect to find the reality. As long as my heart was in the abyss of sin, I thirsted, it is true, after truth, but I despaired of finding it. Only through Jesus Christ, have grace and truth come to me; and we shall enjoy only in Heaven their full light which shall ever burn, never to be extinguished, where joy in God who is Himself the eternal truth, is blessed, eternal life." *

The knowledge, therefore, of unveiled truth will be the first, the chief joy of the soul in Heaven, immeasurably exceeding all other joys, and which this same Father calls "The Paradise of Paradise." What pen can describe the pleasure of the joys that flow from the vision of God? "It is like an ocean in which the fishes are every where surrounded by water, they live in it, and by it, and if drawn out of it, must inevitably perish. Thus it is with the souls of the Just. They are completely immersed in the joys of God, joy within, joy without, joy beneath them, joy above them—every where joy, joy, joy." † How sweet to those souls will be the remembrance of the past! The brave warrior re-

* St. Augustine. † St. Anselm.

members with exultation the bloody battles in which he successfully contended, the combats he fought, the victories he won, the dangers from which he escaped, the difficulities he overcame. Thus will the souls of the Just recall, with unutterable delight, the enemies they have conquered, the world, the *flesh*, hell, their passions, the temptations they so heroically overcame, the works of penance and love they practised, the graces by which they profited, the dangers they avoided. How easily I could have been lost!—each will exclaim—How many situated precisely as I was, who have been eternally lost! Eternal thanks, merciful God! the danger is for ever past! Thy Grace, Mary's protection, Faith, true Catholic belief sustained me, enabled me to be faithful to the last; now I am in security, in happiness for ever!

A similar joy awaits our *Understanding* in Heaven. A glance at the clear mirror of the Divinity will fill the souls of the Just with all heavenly wisdom. All the mysteries of Creation, of Redemption, of Providence, of Sanctification, of the Government of the world will lie open before us as a book composed of sun-beam characters. What will the fragments of human science be in comparison with the knowledge of God's majesty and of His eternal attributes? "Every Just soul will possess such knowledge in Heaven that nothing that she may desire to know can

be kept secret from her—be it in reference to the past or to the future."*

Our wills, too, will have their own peculiar joys in Heaven; for the manifestation of God's glory will perfectly satisfy, completely tranquilize them. No wish will remain ungratified. To will and to have, will be eternally united. "In God, in the one only God, wilt thou find every thing; dost thou desire beauty? 'The Just shall shine as the sun;'† dost thou wish for liberty and strength?' 'They shall be as the Angels of God in Heaven;'‡ dost thou desire the freshness of life?—there is eternal health; dost thou wish to satiate thy palate with the cup of delights? 'They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure;'§ dost thou like harmony? There, Angels sing, and heavenly choirs intone the Alleluia; dost thou wish for society and friends? There thou art in the company of the Saints; dost thou desire honor and riches? 'Glory and wealth shall be in his house;‖ dost thou look for duration and security? 'Of his kingdom there shall be no end.¶'"** Another joy that awaits the soul in Heaven is *Peace;* Peace with God by whom, through whom, with whom she is inseparably united by the bond of eternal peace, in whom she possesses life, joy, happiness,

*St. Anselm. † Matt. xiii., 43. ‡ Ibid. xxii., 30.
§ Ps. xxxv., 9. ‖ Ps. cxi., 3. ¶ Luke i., 33.
** St. Bonaventure.

all goods in one, who is goodness itself—peace with herself, peace without interruption, peace without contradiction, peace without limits, peace without end.

Still another joy that awaits the soul in Heaven will be the simultaneous possession of all possible goods; all come at one and the same time. "What will the Just soul possess in Paradise?" asks St. Bonaventure—and he immediately answers: "Health without sickness, youth without old age. Satiety without surfeit, liberty without service, beauty without deformity; immortality without suffering, abundance without want, peace without disturbance, security without fear, knowledge without limitation, honor without blame, joy without sadness. There the Just will be happy in the pleasant appearance of the place they possess, in the agreeable society in which they are, in the transfiguration of the bodies they honor, in the world they have despised, in hell which they have escaped." St. Anselm endeavors, in like manner, to describe all the heavenly goods the Just souls shall at one and the same time possess. "The portion of their happiness will be beauty, agility, strength, liberty, health, pleasure, durability, knowledge, friendship, union, honor, power, joy and security." "The souls that possess God cannot desire anything else; in this one, supreme Good they have found every good. Where the Supreme infinite

Good is, there is supreme happiness, supreme joy, true liberty, perfect love, eternal security, secure eternity ; there are true gladness, thorough knowledge, all beauty and all happiness ; there are peace, goodness, mildness, strength, honor, joy, sweetness, everlasting life, light, glory, repose, love and sweet unity."*

Another joy awaiting the Just in the future state, will be the astonishment with which they will incessantly admire the greatness, the omnipotence, the wisdom, the infinity of God. Because God will be all in all, the fullness of the happiness which we expect, will consist in nothing else than God Himself ; the sight and possession of Him will ever satisfy, yet without ever surfeiting us. His knowledge during all eternity will be the object of our greatest admiration. And because God is unlimited, unfathomable, immeasurable, our astonishment and our admiration at the grandeur of His works, of His mercy, of His love can never cease. We shall behold the miracles of His justice, and eternally exult that His enemies have been exposed, annihilated and condemned ; that His friends have been elevated, rewarded and justified. We shall admire the wonders of His Providence—the means He employed to lead, to guide, to protect, to sanctify every individual. We shall admire the wonders of His grace—how He has done all things

* St. Bernard.

for the sake of the Elect, that they might become holy ; how He opened to us with Divine liberality the treasures of His graces, and enriched us for eternal life. We shall admire the wonders of His mercy—how, for long years, for a whole life, He waited, nay—sought for the sinful soul; how repeatedly He pardoned her, how kindly He received her, how tenderly He pressed her to His heart. We shall behold the wonders of His mysteries, the unveiling, the accomplishment of our faith, the fulfilling of His promises and of His Divine word to the very least point. We shall admire the wonders of His majesty, of His love of which we, as yet, can form no conception, no thought.

And then our hearts, our souls will, without being consumed, burn in flames of love. And the great community of the loving ones, that is the Blessed and Heavenly Spirits, will intone the eternal hymn of praise. Multitudes, too great to be numbered, will in grand celestial unison exclaim : "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost ; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen." And thousands of other heavenly choirs will sing: "Give praise to the Lord for He is good : for His mercy endureth for ever."* "Yes, the mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever." † "The Heavens shall confess Thy

* Ps. cxvii., 1. † Ps. lxxxviii., 2.

wonders, O Lord: and Thy truth in the Church of the Saints"* "The Lord is sweet to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works—let all Thy works, oh Lord, praise Thee: and let Thy Saints bless Thee."† And in the very highest Heavens, millions of Angelic voices will sing: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, all the earth is full of His Glory."‡ And the deep below will respond: "Holy God! holy powerful God, holy immortal God." And thousands of other choirs will in ecstatic tones sing the Alleluia, and hundreds of thousands will sing hymns of Praise and Love.

Any man who has ever been to any of those renowned places of pilgrimage, can bear testimony to the wonderful power with which the heart is seized at hearing and seeing the multitude of different pilgrims who have there assembled to implore some temporal or spiritual favor, or to return thanks for favors obtained. Without paying any attention to what his neighbor is doing, each prays and sings in his own language, in varying melody. If one is convinced that all he sees and hears, though not very harmonious, proceeds from believing hearts, it will inevitably make a lively, a deep, a lasting impression on his own heart—and will incite him to piety and confidence. Now, we can, from this, have some faint

* Ps. lxxxviii., 6. † Ps. cxliv., 9-10.
‡ Is. vi., 3.

idea of the hymns of heavenly jubilation which are all full of loveliness, of harmony, of clearness, of intelligence, and of truth ; we can imagine the joy and enthusiasm they will produce in the beatified souls. This joy experienced at seeing God and Jesus Christ so highly honored and praised, derives from love its thorough perfection. Love will flow from the hearts of the Blessed into the hearts of Jesus and Mary, and from these rush forth as a mighty torrent into the Ocean of the Triune Divinity, and from this endless, unfathomable, immeasurable ocean of love, it will flow back to the hearts of the happy indwellers of Heaven. This overflow, this exchange of love which at the same time puts us in possession of the joys and the happiness of God, will be the summit and the completion of our heavenly beatitude. Thus will be fulfilled the words of the great St. Augustine: "The Blessed in Heaven will see, love, praise and possess. This, at last, will be their everlasting occupation. Never shall they cease to behold God, and therefore shall they ever be in ecstasies of love. As long as their hearts are full of love, their tongues will overflow with the praises of God ; and as long as their lips praise the Lord, they will enjoy His pleasures and His happiness ; and thus these four occupations will constitute their portion, the joys of their soul, their happiness for all eternity."

PART IX.

ETERNITY IN HEAVEN.

In his travels over the world, where, for many years, he sought only the pleasures and gratifications of his senses and of his corrupt nature, Count P. had the very great misfortune to see the faith of his youth die out in his soul. He doubted about the existence of God, about eternity and about immortality. Having returned to his country, and taken up his residence once more on his own estate, he gave more of his attention to these thoughts. There is, indeed, in this world, no real atheist. The great truths of a Divine Existence, of Eternity and of Immortality, are too deeply rooted in the human heart, to be cast away at will. But, because those who lead wicked lives, feel most keenly, that, if there is a just God, a just retribution, and an Eternity, it will fare most lamentably with them, they endeavor, by fostering doubts concerning these truths, to quiet their consciences which, in spite of their loud and boastful protestation of the contrary, are far from being at ease. One day,

whilst taking a little distracting drive, the Count met one of his tenants who appeared very much cast down. To his kind inquiry about the cause of his dejection, the poor man answered : "Ah! my poor aged father, whom you knew so well, is dead, and I am in such straightened circumstances, that really I have not the means of giving him a decent burial." Naturally kind-hearted the Count gave him a few pieces of gold—it was all he had about him. Works of charity and mercy never go unrewarded ; this too, our friend, Count P., was destined to experience. Returning to his castle, he shut himself up in his library, that undisturbed he might commit to paper the new proofs, which, during his drive, came to his mind in favor of his doubts. But, lo! suddenly stands before him the form of the old peasant towards whose burial he had so charitably contributed. This apparition put the good Count's courage to a very disagreeable proof. The old man abruptly and briefly said to him : "There is a God, there is an Eternity, and the soul of man is immortal," and immediately disappeared. This was indeed no theological proof of these truths; yet it sufficed to destroy the pleasure the Count found in occupying his mind with doubts thereof.

Neither is it our intention to adduce proofs that there is an Eternity ; as Christians we most firmly believe in its existence. This great truth urges us to fly from sin, inflames us with a desire

to practice virtue, and fills us with a longing after the happiness of Heaven. There is nothing, in fact, that acts so powerfully on the human heart as the thought: Ever to be happy, or ever to be unhappy; ever to be in joy, delight, pleasure and beatitude; or ever to be in pain, sufferings, torments and despair; eternally to be with God, in Heaven, in bliss; or eternally to be with the devil, in hell, in reprobation; eternally to be united with God, to love Him, and to possess Him, or eternally to be separated from Him, to hate Him. Our Faith tells us that "one of these Eternities shall be ours; there is no medium." What inconceivable force does not this truth possess! It is properly speaking the completion of all other truths

If not eternal, hell would be no hell; and if not eternal, Heaven would be no Heaven. "It is impossible to be happy unless we are assured the happiness is to last."* The greater the good is that we possess, the more distressing is the thought of losing it. The pleasure derived from earthly goods, is greatly embittered by the certainty that the time is approaching when all shall be torn from us. Yes, even in the richest and most beautiful crown that adorns the brow of royalty, this piercing thorn is found interwoven. Only when we reach the city of God; only in that blessed kingdom, where the King of

*St. Bernard.

truth rules, as St. Austin says—where the law of love obtains, where the never ending duration of eternity is known ; only in the heavenly Sion shall we find all things abiding, constant, lasting and imperishable. "The Just shall live for ever : and their reward is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the most High,"* "of whose kingdom there shall be no end."† "Therefore shall they receive a kingdom of glory, and a crown of beauty at the hand of the Lord : for with His right hand He will cover them and with His holy arm He will defend them."‡ "God hath regenerated us unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that cannot fade, reserved in Heaven for you."§ Will then the pleasures and joys of the Blessed in Heaven never cease? Never. Can the Blessed ever be exposed to lose Paradise? Never. Can they ever be separated from God, ever removed from His love? Never. There shall be fulfilled the words of Christ: "your hearts shall rejoice ; and your joy no man shall take from you."‖ O Joy, O delight! once in possession of Heaven, our happiness, our beatitude will last for ever! The walls of the houses, aye, the city itself in which we live, will fall down and crumble into dust ; the day shall come when estates, kingdoms, nations, and all that is grand will have passed away! Oh! re-

* Wisdom v., 16. † Luke i , 33 ‡ Wisdom v., 17.
§ I. Peter i., 4. ‖ St. John xvi , 22.

joice, ye happy souls, in Heaven! your beatitude will last longer, it will last for ever! Were the whole world composed of sand and dust, and every year a handfull of dust to disappear, it would be a long time before a single mountain would disappear, and many a year before the entire earth would be swept away. Rejoice, ye happy souls in Heaven, your beatitude will last longer, it will last for ever. If every hundred years, one single spoonful of water were to disappear from the ocean, many a hundred years would pass away before the ocean would be dry. Rejoice, ye happy souls, in Heaven, your beatitude will last longer, it will last for ever.

Were a single star to vanish every thousand years, from the firmament, how many million times a thousand years would elapse before the Heavens would be clothed in darkness! Rejoice, ye happy souls, in Heaven! your beatitude will last longer, it will last for ever.

Were an Angel to descend into hell and announce to the reprobates their suffering, a decree of the Almighty, that when the whole world would have dwindled into dust; when the ocean would have been emptied by spoonfulls, at the rate of one spoonful every hundred years; when all the stars of the firmament would have disappeared at the rate of one star every thousand years, God would pardon them, would redeem them from their torments, would free them from that

p.ace of damnation, what joy and what jubilation would be there! Hell would cease to be hell. The damned would suffer with joy, were they assured that, their torments would have an end, though it would be only after hundreds of millions of times a thousand years: A star of hope would rise over that hitherto dismal abode of despair. The day—far distant it is true! still the day would come, when they would behold the Father's countenance, repose in the bosom of God, and enter into the joy of the Lord.

But now as the thought that out of hell there is no redemption, is the sum of the unutterable woes of the reprobates; so the certainty the Just have that Heaven is their eternal inheritance, is the sum of their unutterable joys. "O source of life," exclaims St. Austin enraptured by this hope: "when shall I be able to leave this inhospitable waste and go to the fountain of Thy sweetness, to quench the thirst of my soul at the spring of all mercy, of all joy, and of all love? when shall I enter into the joy of my Lord, to which no condemned being is admitted, and from which no happy soul is excluded? O true! oh sweet! O amiable life! O happy life without end! There, is supreme security, secure tranquility, tranquil joy, joyful sweetness, sweet Eternity and eternal beatitude!"

Yes; for our short service here on earth, for our insignificant and quickly passing trials,

the happy reward of everlasting joys awaits us. Our Christian lives, our works of virtue, are, according to the saying of St. Bernard, the seeds for eternity. We will not enjoy the pleasures of Heaven as we do gratifications here on earth, one after the other; there we shall have all possible happiness at one and the same time. In Heaven there is no past, no future, there is but one eternal present. In Heaven, tranquility, honor, peace, pleasure, love, all the joys of the elect culminate in the grand crown of Eternity. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever."* "We will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever,"† that is to say, of his kingdom and of our happiness there shall be no end, never, no, never!

THE DEGREES OF GLORY IN HEAVEN.

The Royal Prophet exclaims: "Who is the man that desireth life: who loveth to see good days?"‡ Heaven is, so to speak, set up for sale; God Almighty wishes to sell it. You ask: What does it cost? St. Augustine answers: "It costs labor." But since there should be a true proportion between the labor and the recompense, and since Heaven is an eternal rest,

*Exod. xv., 18. †Mich. iv., 5. ‡Ps. xxxiii., 13.

the labor whereby it is obtained should be eternal ; yet the Lord requires only the labor of a few days. "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly, an eternal weight of glory."* The kingdom of Heaven is for sale ! You ask how much does it cost ? St. Chrysostom answers in God's name: "I have no fixed price, so that your poverty may be no excuse for neglecting to purchase it. Give the entire earth, and you shall receive all the joys and all the treasures of Heaven ; give some money, and you shall receive a kingdom ; give what you have, and you shall receive Heaven ; give a penny and you purchase an eternal Paradise ; if you have not a penny, give a piece of bread, give a glass of water, and you purchase thereby the kingdom of Heaven." You ask: How much does it cost ? St. Lawrence Justinian answers: "It costs, as much as you can give. Abraham purchased it by his hospitality to strangers ; Job by his compassion for the afflicted ; Tobias by burying the dead ; Zacheus by distributing half his goods to the poor." "And are you frightened at this price ?" asks St. Augustine. "Then be comforted—the poor widow purchased it for two pence ; yes ; it is still cheaper—you can have it for a glass of water—yes, cheaper still—a *good will* suffices to purchase it." From this facility of

*II. Cor. iv., 17.

of securing the Heavenly kingdom, as a reward of justice according to the measure of our merit, does it not evidently follow that there must necessarily exist different degrees of Glory in Heaven? In what do they consist? How can they be acquired? are questions of the utmost importance, and on which, we will meditate a little while.

The Patriarch Jacob saw in a dream, a ladder reaching from earth to Heaven. St. Romuald and St. Coleta had similar visions. Under the image of a celestial ladder of this sort, or of a golden stair-case, we can represent to ourselves the truth of Faith, that we can ever ascend higher in Heaven's Glory, that we can ever approach nearer to God. True, as limited, created beings, we will never be able to reach the Infinite Good, the Supreme Being; yet we can always approach nearer to His Divine Majesty.

Essential happiness, as we have already said, is the same for all; namely, the knowledge, the vision, the love, the possession of God. This will render each of the Blessed perfectly happy. All will derive from this infinite source as much joy as they can bear. But, although faith and reason tell us that true equality exists among the Saints in Heaven, yet an endless, variety must be found amongst them. "One is the glory of the sun, another is the glory of the moon, and another is the glory of the stars. For star dif-

fereth from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead."* "And in my Father's house," says the Lord, "there are many mansions."† Therefore one house and many mansions, one beatitude but many degrees of it, lower, higher, very high. Thus, in the Parables of the Gospel, the scattered seed produces very different yields—some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, some a hundred-fold; the commerce with the talents has different results, one gaining five, the other ten talents; after his great victory the king bestows different rewards on his faithful servants, according to the degree of their zeal and merit; one he appoints Governor of five, another of ten cities. St. John in the Apocalypse makes mention of different seats in Heaven; the Eternal Father has prepared a place for one at the left, the other at the right of Christ; thus, too, in Heaven, the measure and degree of happiness will be different for each of the Just. Each shall be rewarded according to his works, according to the merits he had acquired during his life, according to the degree of sanctifying grace he has attained. How, indeed, could a child whose innocent soul fled to God the moment the saving waters of Baptism had flowed on its brow, expect the same glory in Heaven, as for instance St. Stephen, who out of love for Jesus allowed himself to be stoned to death! How could the

*I Cor. xv., 41-42. †John xiv., 2.

thief who in the last hour of his life, was converted on the cross, expect to possess as great a glory in Heaven as, for example, the Princes of the Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul! Who does not know that the nine choirs of Angels differ in glory, and that the children of men are destined to possess the thrones and crowns left vacant in the Angel choirs? Who does not know that Heaven's Queen, the Virgin Mary, far surpasses all the Blessed?

This difference of glory among the Saints will produce no discontent, no jealousy, no sadness; each will rejoice in the happiness of the others as in his own—nevertheless a real difference will exist. In the court of an earthly king we see attendants of various degrees—there are servants, porters, guards, nobles, chamberlains, counts, dukes, ministers, princes, etc. All these together compose the king's court. Every one is satisfied with his position, yet how great a difference exists between a porter and a minister of state, between a nobleman and a prince? Infinitely greater is the difference of degrees of honor and glory in the court of the King of Heaven. St. Thomas of Aquinas says, that the lowest grade of heavenly glory infinitely surpasses the glory belonging to all the crowns and kingdoms in the world.

Now, as long as we are in the flesh, we can every day, every hour, every moment, multiply these degrees of Beatitude. The good use of time

is for us the condition of a happy eternity—and of the degree of our happiness. When time is at an end, our lot is irrevocably decided for ever—then advancement becomes impossible. But as long as we breathe, as long as our hearts pulsate, we can mount higher on the heavenly ladder, we can ascend the golden stairway as high as we wish. The higher the degree to which we rise, the greater is the pleasure we afford the Almighty. No matter how great our merits, God's treasures are ever able to crown and reward them —they are infinitely abundant. But now, if we bear in mind what Faith teaches us about the Vision of God, it will not be difficult for us to understand in what the degrees of Glory in Heaven consist. As already stated, there is in Heaven what we call *accidental* beatitude. This consists in the pleasures of the soul and of the senses elevated in a special manner, by Almighty God; pleasures which correspond to the violence we have done ourselves, to our sacrifices, to our works, to our merits, to our love—in the joys which we shall experience according to the greatness of our combats, of our victory, of our fidelity, by sharing with the Saints and Angels in Heaven, and by enjoying their esteem and their love. It consists also in that tender, interior *return-love* which, according to the amount of graces that we have secured in this life, and our capacity of receiving them, we expect

from Jesus and Mary in Heaven; the reward for every, even the smallest degree of merit, will most undoubtedly consist in a higher degree of the knowledge, of the vision, of the love, of the possession of God. A simple, unlettered man, ignorant of all the secrets of science, sees in a clear, cold night, as many stars in the firmament as the learned astronomer does. Yet how vast the difference between the knowledge each possesses of the starry Heavens! The one sees nothing more than a great number of sparkling stars, the other knows each one of them—he knows their names, their movements, their differences, their forms, and all the wonders God has revealed about the starry world. Thus shall it be in Heaven; all the Blessed will behold the unveiled countenance of God, they shall know His entire Divine essence, His omnipotence, His wisdom, His beauty, His sanctity, His goodness, His eternity. Yet, this vision and knowledge of God will be much more clear, more brilliant, more perfect, more beaming for some than for others, according as each one receives as the reward of his merits, a greater or less share in the immense light of glory. On precisely the same principle, the resembling to, the changing, the transformation into God which takes place in all the Saints, will bring incomparably more honor to some than to others—that is, according to their degree of merit. "The very last denizen of

Heaven, whom a single ray of Glory's light adorns, shall shine seven times more brightly than the sun. Thus, therefore, he who has acquired a thousand degrees of Heavenly glory, shall be encompassed with a thousand times greater brilliancy in Heaven."* According to this same rule we shall be made partakers of God's love; and every loving heart knows and feels how love is increased by even the very smallest signs, and how much more happy this increased love makes us. After long separation, a mother's heart is once more gladdened by the presence of her three children. Passionately pressing one after the other to her bosom, "My beloved child," she says to one; "My much-beloved, good, dear child," she says to the second; "Oh, my most dear, most beloved child!" she says to the third. Would not these words express a great gradation of love?

According to this same rule also, will the complete possession of God pour its felicity into our hearts; for if, by the practice of virtue, by sanctity, by higher degrees of merit, we have rendered ourselves capable of receiving a higher measure of Heaven's joys, this capacity shall be amply satisfied. If the sanctifying grace which a child receives through the Sacrament of Baptism, merits for it the happiness of Heaven, how immeasurably greater must not the joy and happiness of a Saint be who, by the heroic practice of virtue, by per-

* St. Augustine.

forming great Christian acts, by patient, silent suffering for twenty, thirty, fifty years here on earth, has every day, every hour, multiplied the treasures of his merits, and deserved a million times a higher degree of celestial glory? Oh! were there any thing in Heaven that could cause sadness to the Elect, it would be the conviction, that whilst they had the opportunity of daily and hourly multiplying the degrees of sanctifying grace, of future glory, of ascending higher and higher on the golden stair-way of Heaven, by making insignificant sacrifices, they foolishly neglected to extend their hands and lay hold of the various celestial crowns within such easy reach!

But is it, then, really easy, in our every day life, to increase our Glory in Heaven? Faith gives the answer to this question; for it teaches, that man by his actions in this life can increase in his soul sanctifying grace to an indefinite degree. As long as one is in a state of mortal sin, he can by no action, be it ever so holy, so heroic, merit any thing for eternal life. True, if a man in a state of sin prays, performs works of charity, or any other good work, he will dispose the Almighty to grant him more readily the grace of conversion; but all the good works he does in this state are not meritorious for eternal life. If, on the contrary, we are in a state of grace, God accepts as meritorious for Heaven not only our acts of virtue, but even the small, daily, ordinary

actions of life, provided, however, they are done with a good intention, from a supernatural motive—done for God. Thus, the very commonest actions of life can be made to procure for us a new degree of sanctifying grace which has a corresponding degree of Glory in Heaven. This consoling truth is an article of our Faith, and the Holy Council of Trent anathematizes whoever should assert the contrary. Oh, my God! what a Divine liberality! The least work of charity, the least act of self-denial, every prayer, every time we bend the knee, every sigh to God, every pious desire, nay! even the most indifferent actions, such as to eat, to drink, to recreate one's self, if offered to God, if done with a view to please Him, are all as it were, bills of exchange, payable at the Heavenly Treasury. But let us understand a little more thoroughly the wonderful devices of the Divine love, which show the sincere will and desire of God to have us one day very high in glory, right near His own Heart.

Of all the rewards that God can bestow upon our good works, the increase of grace and glory alone remain our personal good. In our virtuous actions we may have other pious objects in view than to advance our glory in the future life. We are allowed to ask, and by good works may obtain, health, temporal prosperity, a long life, assistance in time of temptation, the conversion of a sinner, the inspiration of the Holy Ghost,

perseverance in the love of God, a happy death, and so forth. These favors, which the Lord can give us, and which, if for our good, and we humbly and confidently ask them of Him, He will give us, are not precisely the recompense of our good works. We can expect them as a gift, a favor, but not as a reward to which in justice we are entitled. The only merit we can acquire for our souls, is no other than a greater intensity, so to speak, of sanctifying grace, and a higher degree of glory in the life to come. This merit belongs so intimately to us, that it is impossible for us to dispose of it in favor of another. We can apply to our fellow-beings the fruits of other good works, such as our prayers, our alms-deeds, our charity; we can offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for others; we can, as many pious Christians do, perform all good works for the souls in Purgatory. God accepts all these as satisfaction, as intercession for the remission of the punishment due to our sins; but even by ceding these works to others, I am acquiring merit in the sight of God, who rewards me by giving me an increase of sanctifying grace and the promise of a corresponding elevation in the degree of celestial glory. This reward, even if I desire, even if I have that intention in view when performing the work, I can never cede to another. It remains mine for the day of retribution. What goodness,

what care on the part of God really to increase our happiness, to make us truly happy!

This merit of our good works will ever increase in the sight of God, in proportion as we advance in sanctifying grace. A simple comparison will illustrate this assertion. A merchant invests in commerce a certain sum of money—say—a hundred dollars. With these he gains another hundred. He now invests two hundred and makes four hundred—with these four he makes eight hundred, and so on, always doubling his capital. The case is almost identical with sanctifying grace. If the degree of this grace in my soul has been doubled, all my actions immediately assume a double value in the sight of God. Now with every act of virtue, to express myself metaphorically, I double the active capital with which I am endeavoring to increase my fortune in Heaven. Thus the amount of my merit and its corresponding degree of glory, is, so to say, increased to infinity. What riches, what an immense treasure can a man thus secure for himself in one year, aye, in one day!

This merit which we, aided of course by Divine grace, acquire by our own exertion, and by our own labor, God will in a wonderful manner increase more and more ; not indeed by any work of ours, but, as it were, by bestowing alms upon us; by a free gift of his own Divine liberality. This happens in the reception of the Sacraments,

whence, as from their source, that is to say from the treasures of the merits of Jesus Christ, graces are immediately poured in our souls. Thus, as often as we receive the Holy Sacrament of Penance, and, still more so, the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, in which Jesus, the very author of grace unites Himself with us, we acquire a great increase, a new degree of sanctifying grace with an ever corresponding one of glory in Heaven. As one attracts and coaxes along a little lamb with a green twig, or a child with some sweet fruit, so by his infallible promise God, as it were, attracts and entices us to apply frequently and joyfully to this fountain of grace and salvation.

Our daily faults, our venial sins do not diminish this merit—a truth which ought to fill us poor, sinful creatures with great joy, and with heartfelt gratitude towards the infinite goodness of the Almighty. Though our venial faults should be as numerous as the grains of sand on the sea shore, provided we are free from mortal sin, we lose nothing of the treasures of sanctifying grace which we may have gathered and secured. Ah, how differently do men deal with one another!

Were a friend to owe me a hundred dollars, and I to contract a debt with him of seventy dollars, is it not likely that in paying me he would deduct the seventy from the hundred? But

such is not the case with our infinitely kind, and generous God! It affords His Divine Majesty, infinite pleasure to know that we, as good children, acquire a right to ask much of Him; that He is called on to render us happy, and to reward us, by conferring on us a very high degree of heavenly glory. Hence, as Faith teaches, God deals with us in a way quite different from that of men. God has for His Elect, to express my thought again metaphorically, two books, quite separate; the accounts of which are so independent of each other that the entries made in one, can, in no wise, affect those made in the other. In one, the Book of Life—are recorded the merits of our good works which the Lord, of His own free will, has bound Himself in justice to reward, and which, on the day of general retribution, He shall and must recompense. In the other—the Book of Debts—are most minutely inscribed our daily faults, our venial sins, and also the temporal punishments due to mortal sins which have been pardoned, but which have not yet been atoned for. When there will be question of closing the account, God will not say as men do: "There is so much to your credit—but you are debtor for so much—what remains after having deducted what you owe, is all you can claim." No, no! Eternal Love keeps no such accounts; else it would fare badly with us poor creatures who, day after day, and almost continually, in spite of our repeated

resolves, fall into many venial sins, defects and imperfections. For, after an exact deduction would have been made from our acquired recompense, we should be in great danger of finding scarcely anything remaining with us. Thanks, a thousand times thanks to God, for not thus squaring his accounts with us. We can, on the contrary, suppose Him saying to us: "In my Book of your debts, I find many not yet paid up. Many venial sins committed, and many graces neglected or abused, still form your debt. This you must pay to the very last farthing either by satisfaction in this life, or expiation in the next. But as far as regards the Book of Life—the whole capital of sanctifying grace which you have acquired, remains yours, undiminished and secured for all eternity. And if you die in my friendship, when your debt shall have been entirely cancelled, I shall pay, in Heaven, the very last iota, without making the slightest deduction, and with the greatest fidelity, all that I owe you; namely, the many thousand degrees of eternal glory to which you are entitled."

O! how consoling! how joyful this thought is! Though we may have to spend many a long day in the expiating fires of Purgatory, yet the merit we have acquired in this life shall, in the end, have its full, complete reward!

Finally, no human power, no diabolical temptation, nothing, except sin, can deprive us of this

merit. Whoever has had the inexpressible misfortune of committing a mortal sin, loses all his acquired merit, and even all hope, whilst in this state, of receiving any remuneration for his former acts of virtue; and should he die in his sins, he could not expect during all eternity, the slightest recompense for the meritorious works he may have performed in his preceding life. The reason is, God becomes his enemy, and the kingdom of Heaven is only for the friends and children of God. "But if the Just man turn himself away from his justice, and do iniquity which the wicked man useth to work, shall he live? *All his justices which he hath done, shall not be remembered:* in the prevarication by which he hath prevaricated, and in his sins which he hath committed, in them he shall die."* But if the sinful man, by a sincere confession, by perfect contrition, makes his reconciliation with his God, the eternal Father will not only pardon his past sins, receive him back into His love, and give him a right to hope again for eternal felicity, but He will also restore to him his former merits which were written in the Book of Life, but which his sins had effaced. God revives these claims on His Divine justice, and makes them reassume their original, undiminished value, as though man had never fallen; and deeming Himself man's debtor, He is both willing and able to pay them on the day of

* Ezech. xviii., 24.

universal requital. Nay! strange though it may appear, God accepts this last repentance as a source of new merit. Thus, the returning sinner finds, not only his lost merit restored, but even increased by this new act of repentance whereby he has been reconciled to his Creator. "But if the wicked do penance for all his sins, which he hath committed, and keep all My commandments, he shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done."*

How astonishing, how wonderful are not then, God's goodness and liberality towards us! He is really earnest in His efforts, not only to make us eternally happy, but also to elevate us to a very high degree of heavenly glory. This love is especially evident in many men, whom, by the very great length of their lives, and by the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, He called to virtue and sanctity. Yes, it is no little favor which God has promised to those who love and honor their Father and Mother, that they would be blessed with a long and happy life here on earth. For a long life of sixty, seventy or eighty years, if turned to a good use, enables us to reach the very highest grade of heavenly glory, even the vacant thrones of the Cherubs and burning Seraphs. The inspirations then of the Holy Ghost, who sweetly and silently, though strongly, attracts, calls and draws our hearts to

*Ezech. xviii., 21, 22.

works of penance, of virtue, of heroism, of love, are nothing else than an earnest that God will give us in Heaven, more beautiful crowns, greater happiness, higher degrees of glory, than He will to those who have not been blessed with such inspirations.

From all that has been said about the degrees of glory in the future life, a Christian, at least one who has the kingdom of Heaven at heart, should draw this practical conclusion: that he should zealously devote the short space of this life, to the salvation of his soul, to the active trading in the precious talents which the Lord has confided to him, till He comes to ask an account of them. Not only heroic but even the most insignificant acts of virtue, performed every day, every hour, every instant through love of God, is all important in increasing and in multiplying the degrees of heavenly glory.

Let us suppose two men whose merits for eternal life are perfectly equal; who have precisely the same grounds for hoping to possess exactly the same degree of glory in Heaven. Let us now suppose that both take a walk in a garden carefully and tastefully laid out, where, at every step, they behold the most beautiful flowers, by whose rich, sweet and most agreeable perfumes they are constantly regaled. One of them plucks a blooming rose, on which he feasts his sense of smelling. The other, too, feels the inclination to give his

senses this same little gratification, but owing to a thought suggested by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he represses his inclination, saying to himself: I will not pluck the rose, I will forego the pleasure of its delicious fragrance; I will rather offer to God this little sacrifice as a proof of my love and devotion to Him. Love's offerings are freely made—it is not the greatness of the deed, but the dispositions of the heart, that give value to the sacrifice. He, therefore, abstains from breaking the little stem of the delicious rose, through love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Now, when these two men, who, before entering the garden were, as we suppose, perfectly equal in merits, appear before the tribunal of God, he who did not pluck the rose, but offered to God this little gratification of his senses, shall enjoy during eternity a higher degree of glory—that is to say, he shall eternally see God in clearer light, have eternally a more perfect knowledge of Him, possess Him eternally with a purer love, and by this possession eternally enjoy in Heaven a sweeter and higher pleasure than the other, who did not deny himself this sensual gratification.

THE CROWNS IN HEAVEN.

A crown is the most beautiful, the most noble, and, at least for a courageous heart, the most at-

tractive image under which St. Paul represents eternal felicity. The old Romans, hardy Republicans, before the enervating days of the Empire, deemed their hardships and their sufferings during war, in defence of their Fatherland, amply rewarded by the bestowal of a crown. We are told they had seven different kinds of crowns, indicating as many degrees of acknowledgment on the part of a grateful country, for the services rendered to her.

We Christians are animated by higher aspirations--crowns of silver and gold cannot satisfy our ambition. St. Louis, king of France, whose sceptre and crown are symbolical of the power with which he ruled the French kingdom, ordered for himself a ring of very costly material. On the ring was the inscription: Volo solidum, perenne—I desire something real, eternal. By these words the Saint wished to show that, as a Christian, he found the crown of even great and powerful France too little, too insignificant for him—all his aims tended towards the kingdom of Heaven —he longed for the crown of eternity. St. Paul calls eternal beatitude the "crown of justice"* —because we receive it as the reward of our good works, and of our merit. St. Peter calls it a "never-fading crown of glory,"† whose beauty never changes. St. James calls it a "crown of life"‡—for all who possess it, possess eternal

*II. Tim. iv., 8. †I. Pet. v., 4. ‡St. James i., 12.

life. The Prophet Isaias says, that God will bestow a "crown"* on him who shall remain true to Him in spite of all opposition.

This heavenly crown is intended for all who walk in the commandments of God. "There is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord the just Judge will render to me in that day: and not only to me, but to them also that love His coming."† This crown is the celestial beatitude, the vision of God, the recompense of Heaven. All the Blessed shall derive their happiness from the same infinite source; all shall see the face of God, all shall love Him, possess Him and partake of His beatitude, according to the measure of their capacities. This is the essence of the eternal beatitude, represented to us under the figure of the crown of Heaven. The more virtuous, the more perfect, and the more holy, one has been on earth, the greater, shall be the joy and pleasure that he shall, as it it were, draw from the ocean of Divine happiness. The more degrees of celestial glory one has deserved by the merits he acquired on earth, the more beautiful, the more radiant shall be his crown in Heaven. Every degree of glory is a new precious stone, a new gem, a new star in the heavenly crown. As on earth there are crowns of different value, rank and dignity—such as those of Barons, of Counts, of Princes, of Dukes, of Kings, and of

*Is. lxi., 3. †II. Tim. iv., 8.

Emperors; so in Heaven, though all the Blessed are adorned with the same crown, that is the crown of justice, of glory, and of eternal life, the beauty of each one's crown is different.

Whoever wishes to acquire this heavenly crown must seriously and earnestly exert himself, must use violence. "Not those who from a place of security, look on the desperate struggles of the battlefield, but those who enter into the battle and by their strong arms bear off the victory shall be crowned."* Hence St. Paul compares the crown of Heaven to a race in which all who strive for the prize must not stop a moment, but run forward towards the goal with all possible speed. "Know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things: and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown: but we an incorruptible one."† There are men who indeed run; that is to say they give themselves trouble; they exert themselves, they earnestly strive, they labor, so to say day and night for this great prize, but they are off the track, on the wrong road, out of the way; and, therefore, in spite of all their efforts and exertions, they do not reach the goal. "I therefore, so run," writes the Apostle of himself: "not as at

*St. Greg. Naz. †I. Cor. ix., 24-25.

an uncertainty: I so fight, not as one beating the air;* forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus:† all indeed run, but one receiveth the prize."‡ And indeed, if a man, to secure an earthly crown deems no sacrifice too great; if a man can hope for a great recompense only after great exertions; is it not reasonable that we should be ready to make every effort to gain the crown of Heaven? Nay, as St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom say, in order to win the crown of Heaven we ought to be prepared to endure the pains of hell. We must then, according to the command of Jesus Christ, use violence—for "the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."§ We cannot therefore form any alliance with the spirit of the world, "for what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting."‖ We must not be slaves of earthly goods; we must rather make such a use of them that they may not cause us to lose what is eternal. "The time is short: it remaineth that they also who have wives, be as if they had none: and

* I. Cor. ix., 26. † Philip. iii., 13-14. ‡ I. Cor. ix., 24.
§ Matt. xi., 12. ‖ Gal. vi., 8.

they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not: for the fashion of this world passeth away."* Yes, we must taste of the chalice of which the Lord drank. "He that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal."† None but those who have washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb are crowned in Heaven; for the Lord says, that unless we take up our cross and follow Him, we cannot be His disciples.‡ "As the hope of the crop is in the seed, so the hope of eternal glory is in tribulation."§ "God has promised us repose after our labors, freedom after subjection, security after fears, consolation after affliction; after death, He promises resurrection; after resurrection, full, supreme, eternal joy, the crown of beatitude."‖ He who wishes to gain the crown must contend and strive——for he also that striveth for the mastery, is not crowned, except he strive lawfully."¶ "And every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things: and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown: but we an incorruptible one."** The Christian must therefore practice self-denial; he must die to

* I. Cor. vii., 29-31. † St. John, xii., 25. ‡ Luke xiv., 27.
§ St. Bernard. ‖ St. Augustine. ¶ II. Tim. ii., 5.
** I. Cor. ix., 25.

his passions and to the things of this world. He must watch and pray that the enemy may not fall upon him unawares. He must put on the armor with which his guide to Heaven, the Church presents him. "Put on Jesus Christ," says the Apostle, "put you on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood: but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness; against the spirits of wickedness in the high places. Therefore take unto you the armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of justice—In all things taking the shield of Faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God."* Thus armed, the Christian, whose whole life is a combat, can confidently march to the field of battle. He hears Jesus, his leader, under whose banner he is prepared to fight to the last, address Him in these words: what you see me do, do you it, and do it quickly. He who has once decided faithfully to follow Christ, feels in his heart an unwavering confidence in the successful result of the battle.

*Eph. vi., 11-17.

We cannot fail to secure the crown. "Our help is in the name of the Lord who made Heaven and earth.* "If God be for us, who is against us?" † "And this is the victory which overcometh the world our Faith."‡ By the cross we reach salvation. There is no comparison between the sufferings we are called on to endure in this life and the glory we shall thereby acquire for the next. If we combat faithfully to the end, we shall win the kingdom which our Lord and Ruler and King Jesus Christ has prepared for us. Of such as do so, Jesus Christ Himself says: "To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with Me on My throne: as I also have overcome and am set down with My Father, in His throne."§ O happy would we be, should we, like St. Paul, at the end of our lives be able to say: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge will render to me in that day: and not only to me, but to them also that love His coming,"‖ and of our kingdom there shall be no end. With this beautiful, imperishable crown of justice was Stephen's noble brow adorned; and because he saw Jesus environed by the glory of God, ready to bestow it upon him, the stones which were making a martyr of him, appeared

* Ps. cxxiii., 8. † Rom. viii, 31. ‡ I. John v., 4.
§ Apoc. iii., 21. ‖ II. Tim. iv., 7-8.

unutterably sweet. This crown of Heaven an Angel of God in the midst of the flames, placed on the brow of the holy martyr Capracius, who, on account of his Faith was burnt to death at the stake. It was with this crown of Heaven the forty martyrs were honored, who, on account of their Faith, were compelled to end their lives during a cold winter's night in a frozen lake. This crown of Heaven St. Agapitus received, whom his own Father had beheaded. This crown of Heaven, the holy Virgin Lidwina merited and obtained by her sufferings and afflictions of thirty-eight years. This crown of Heaven was deservedly bestowed upon St. Catherine of Siena, who of her own free choice, wished during her earthly life, to wear no other crown than one of thorns. This crown will be given to all the Blessed, who will have lawfully fought and vanquished; who will have departed this life in the peace of the Lord.

THE THREE LITTLE CROWNS OF HEAVEN.

"The victorious emperor returning from his military expeditions celebrates his triumph by a magnificent entry into his imperial city. If there had been no war, there would have been no victory, and consequently, no opportunity of receiv-

ing from the elated inhabitants this public demonstration of jubilation over his victory. This joy in the triumphant entry, is in proportion to the dangers that threatened him on battle's gory fields. A terrific storm lashes the ocean into fury ; the mariner sees himself and his vessel in imminent danger of perishing in the maddened waters. The dreadful doom that threatens him betrays itself in the anxiety depicted on his fear-blanched features. But suddenly the wind dies away, the waves lose their menacing aspect, the ocean is calm, the clouds are dispelled, the sun smiles on a scene which, a moment before was one of terror, confusion and dismay. All is joy on board the lately imperiled vessel ; nay, the joy is the more intense, the greater was the danger through which the crew so safely and so unexpectedly passed. Joy is always in proportion to the difficulties that have preceded. For a laborious work, a great reward ; for long sufferings, a rich recompense."*

These charming sentiments of the holy African Doctor, recall to our memory what faith teaches us about the rewards of eternal life, and on which we have already meditated. Each one receives his reward according to his merit—the crown of justice, the crown of Heaven, the possession of God as essential happiness.

St. Thomas and other theologians teach, that,

*St. Augustine.

besides the essential, and the so-called accidental happiness on which we have already meditated, there are in Heaven Three *little Crowns*, which consist in an especial dignity, distinction, and personally characteristic beatitude, which will be given only to those whose lives in this world have merited, beyond the crown common to all the Elect, this special mark of honor on the part of God.

These Three special little Crowns of Heaven, these crowns of honor, called *Aureolas*, are held out to those who have signally distinguished themselves in the terrific war waged against them by the world, by hell, and by the flesh; and who have gained an extraordinary and heroic victory over them. During the long, happy days of eternity, these warriors, crowned on so many battle-fields, shall be distinguished from those who do not possess such honorable decorations.

The first of these heavenly crowns of honor is that of the martyrs. Who are those happy beings amongst the heavenly choirs, with palms in their hands, and crowns on their heads, whom we see shining with a peculiar brilliancy? The glorious, blood-dyed, brilliant beams which stream from the wounds of Jesus, the King of Martyrs, and from the heart of Mary pierced with a seven-fold sword, fall on this immense heavenly multitude. Who can they be? Ah! They are the love-glowing choir of martyrs. Since, as St. Leo

says, the perfection of all sanctity, the sum-total of all virtue, flows from the love of God and of our neighbor, it is evident that this brilliancy of love should throw about no one so bright a lustre, so dazzling a distinction, as around the blessed Martyrs, who, by their suffering and love, so much resemble our Lord Jesus Christ, who for the love of men, hesitated not to endure the most unheard of sufferings, nay, to lay down His life. If Christ has promised eternal felicity—the crown of Heaven, even to those who suffer persecution for justice' sake; we can understand how a great distinction and a special crown of victory can await in the next life, those who in this, either in testimony of the truth of the Faith, or in defence of any virtue connected with it, not only suffer insults, afflictions and torments, but even yield up, through the instrumentality of their persecutors, their very lives, their supreme earthly good. "He, who with patience suffers insults and afflictions for the name of Jesus, gathers into his heart most precious jewels with which he will one day ornament his crown, of which the Church sings: 'A golden crown is placed upon his brow, it is impressed with the sign of sanctity, it shines with the glory of honor and of fortitude.'"* O happy! thrice happy souls that have valiantly, aye, even heroically triumphed over the world; that have not hesitated in this noble conflict of their Faith,

*Cardinal Hugo.

to offer up their bodies, nay their very heart's blood! They shall be especially honored in Heaven by Jesus Himself, as heroes; even here on earth their example excites astonishment, and animates the hearts of Christians to deeds of heroism. "Such and such persons were able to practice heroic deeds of virtue, and why not thou, Augustine?" These same words which urged this great saint to the practice of virtue, are felt by every Christian in the very depth of his heart. When we see virgins tenderly, delicately brought up, blooming youths, and weak old men whose locks the snows of many winters whitened, so animated to deeds of heroism by the love of Jesus and the hope of eternal life, that they made little of, utterly despised the fires, the swords, and tortures prepared to force them to renounce Christ; nay, more, when we see that by their very death they completely triumphed over their executioners; we feel wonderfully encouraged and strengthened to persevere in the comparatively insignificant combats which we have to sustain. It was this feeling that made Tertullian say that the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians. This triumph of love which makes a man lay down his life in testimony of Jesus Christ, most justly deserves a special reward in Heaven. Though we do not know in what precisely, this distinctive reward, this special degree of beatitude consists, of its existence we can-

not doubt. Faith calls it the *crown of martyrdom.*

A similar distinction awaits those who, out of love for God, have embraced the *state of virginity.* All men have to wage war against the flesh, the second capital enemy of their salvation. Nothing defiled can enter Heaven.* Marriage and widowhood are holy states, but far higher and far more exalted than these, is holy virginity. "It is an unfading crown, a temple of God, a sanctuary of the Holy Ghost, a precious jewel, which only the Elect seek, which few find, and which many hate."†

In the old Law, the great value and dignity of this virtue, was, as it were, veiled from the world. It was only Jesus who revealed to us how great a treasure continency is, since by it we resemble the Angels and become wedded to their King. So great is the struggle against our domestic enemy, the flesh; so difficult is the striving to observe continency during one's entire life, that our Lord has not imposed this sacrifice upon us, as an obligation. He contents Himself with counseling us to embrace the state of Virginity. "All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given. He that can take it, let him take it."‡ "He is pure who overcomes one love by another, sensual love by love of Jesus; and who extinguishes one fire by another, the fire of the

* Apoc. xxi., 27. † St. Athanasius. ‡ Matt. xix., 11-12.

passions by the fire of the spirit."* But this great sacrifice on the part of man, in favor of Virginity, can on the great day of Eternity, count on receiving a signal reward. He who dies in the grace of God, after having of his own free choice, and out of love for God, preserved during his whole life, the purity of his body, shall receive in Heaven, besides the ordinary happiness common to all the Elect, viz., the vision of God —a special dignity and distinction—a peculiar happiness of his or her own, a wreath of honor, the *Crown of Virginity*, which for all eternity will distinguish the happy souls that possess it, from those that have it not. "They that shall *choose* the things that *please* Me, and shall *hold fast* My covenant," says the Prophet, "I will give to them in My house, within My walls, a place and a name better than sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name which shall never perish."† And what kind of a name shall this be? The answer we find in the Canticle of Canticles: "Come, My spouse, thou shalt be crowned."‡ And that we may, in passing, have an idea of the happiness in Heaven indicated by the little *Crown of Virginity*, St. Thomas, the Angelic Doctor says, that Virgins shall be remarkable in Heaven for the especially confidential intercourse they shall have with Jesus. This too, is the doctrine of the Apocalypse wherein

* St. Augustine. † Is. lvi., 5. ‡ Cant. of Canticles iv., 8.

St. John describes, in the following words, the happiness which the Doctors of the Church call the *Crown* of *Virginity* : "And I beheld : and lo ! a Lamb stood upon Mount Sion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand having his name, and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. And they sung as it were a new canticle, before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the ancients : and no man could say the canticle, but those hundred and forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women : for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb."*

O ! when we think on these words, we can understand why the holy Fathers could find no terms sufficiently strong to express their admiration and praise of virginity. "O Purity ! thou rejoicest the heart of him who possesses thee ! thou givest wings to the soul that she may fly to Heaven ! O Purity ! Thou bloomest in love and in the soul, as a rose which fills the whole house with the fragrance of its perfume."† "What is more pleasing, more beautiful and more elevated than virginity ? It sends forth beams more glorious than those of the sun, and renders us capable of gazing with a steady eye on the sun

* Apoc. xiv., 1, 3, 4. † St. Ephrem.

of justice."* "Happy he who possesses thee; happy indeed is he who preserves thee! Thou art the joy of the Prophets, the glory of the Apostles, the life of the Angels, the crown of the Blessed."† How great then is the happiness of those, who, besides the crown of justice, deserve to possess in Heaven the little *Crown of Virginity!*

The third little heavenly crown of honor, is that of the holy Doctors. Not only those who have been victorious over the world and the flesh, but also those who will have conquered hell, by imparting knowledge to others, besides the happiness which consists in the vision of God, shall be rewarded with a peculiar crown of honor, the *Aureola* of Doctors. Whoever therefore preaches, or teaches, or writes in the service of the Gospel and for the salvation of souls, shall receive in Heaven a mark of distinction, which we may call the Apostolical crown. The Prophet Daniel tells us, that in Heaven there will be as great a difference between the beatitude of the common faithful and that of the Priests, Preachers and Teachers, who will have contributed to form the people to piety and sanctity, as between the stars which sparkle in the firmament, and the light the firmament derives from the stars. "And many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake: some unto life

* Isodore. † St. Athanasius.

everlasting, others unto reproach to see it always. But they that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity."* We readily understand that there is nothing more just, than that a special crown should be bestowed upon those who have toiled to impart a religious instruction to others. Every Christian, without exception, is bound to resist the temptations of hell. But he who by communicating the doctrine of truth, by preaching the Gospel, has terrified, has completely conquered the spirit of darkness, and, by zeal in the discharge of his office, has expelled him from the hearts of the faithful, deserves incontrovertibly, a special crown, an extraordinary mark of distinction. A powerful king rewards in some way or other, a whole army when it has gained a glorious victory over the enemies of the state; yet he confers on the successful leader of this victorious army, special marks of favor and approval which are neither offered to nor expected by the common soldiers. A skilful Pilot, whose experience, knowledge and watchfulness enable him to bring his vessel safely through the storms of the ocean, and lead her into a secure harbor, receives from the owners a greater recompense than the sailors who, perhaps, endured more hardship, and exposed their lives to greater dangers than

*Dan. xii., 2-3.

the pilot. A Minister of State, who, in the absence of his master governs the kingdom with consummate wisdom, checks all attempts to disturb the peace, suppresses all revolutions, utterly discomfits all internal enemies, most undeniably deserves a greater recompense, a more conspicuous mark of favor, than the common though faithful subjects. Now, the Church is an army set in battle array : the leaders of this army are the Priests, the Preachers and the Instructors of the faithful. The Church is a noble vessel driven hither and thither by the furious tempests of persecution : the Priests, the Preachers and Instructors, are the Pilots who have to steer this vessel clear of the thousand rocks that arise and impede her course, and threaten her total destruction. The Church is a kingdom which is not unfrequently troubled by revolutions and disturbances of the peace ; the Priests, Preachers and Instructors, are the Ministers of State of their absent king ; they must govern the kingdom, and maintain order and subjection amongst the inhabitants till his return. "If God esteems human souls more highly than all his other works, in what degree of glory and happiness must He not place those, who, at great sacrifices to themselves, have gained human souls for Him ?"* The Preacher who is inflamed with zeal for the Kingdom of Christ ; who explains and observes the law of

* St Chrysostom.

God ; who deeply impresses it on the hearts of the Christian world, can consider as addressed to Himself these words of His Lord and Master : "He that shall do and teach (the commandments), he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven."* The Teachers, the Instructors, the Doctors, therefore, of the Church, shall be decorated in Heaven with the *Aureola of Doctors*, with the Apostolical crown of honor ; and shall be for ever distinguished from the common multitude of the Elect.

Such, then, are the *Three little Crowns of Heaven;* which, besides the crown of justice, destined for all the Blessed, are prepared for those who by their heroism, have been victorious over the world, the devil and the flesh. The crown of martyrs†—is set with most costly jewels; because like diamonds they have offered an unshaken resistance to all attacks, they have persevered unto death in the combat for the faith. The crown of Virgins is composed of roses ; because Virgins are the most beautiful flowers of Christianity, and the virtue of purity itself, surrounded by the dangers of the world, is like unto roses and lilies beneath the thorns. The crown of Doctors is made out of the purest gold—for gold is the most noble of all metals, and is the emblem of wisdom.

* St. Matt. v., 19.

† See St. Bonaventure's beautiful description of the three little crowns.

PART X.

The Seven Stars of Christian Hope.

After having considered the crown of Heaven; after having examined its beauty, its richness, and its dignity; we should ask ourselves the all-important question: Have I a star of hope, guiding me to the possession of this so earnestly desired happiness of Heaven? Is this crown for me? Our object in this little chapter, is to give the answer to this question, and thus to enable all to judge (not of course with absolute certainty,) whether there is for each one of them a grounded hope of entering into eternal happiness. Though "man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred;"* though we are told "with fear and trembling to work out our salvation;"† though we are, as long as we breathe, even those who are in the way of Christian perfection, never secure against falling; though "we are unprofitable servants,"‡ even after having performed noble works of charity; (for the glory and honor of every good work belong to God, since without

* Eccle. ix., 1. † Phil. ii., 12. ‡ St. Luke xvii., 10.

the assistance of His grace we can do absolutely nothing meritorious for eternal life,) nevertheless we can have a certain assurance, a certain guiding star to show us that this heavenly crown is to be ours. Though we are commanded ever to foster in our hearts a Christian Hope of our salvation, we place all our reliance on the merits of Jesus Christ ; and, although by a proper use of our personal liberty we have co-operated with Divine grace, we ascribe to our dear Saviour all the good we do ; therefore, we have a certain degree of assurance that Heaven's crown shall be ours. If we wish a more positive ground for the hope to which we cling, let us in all humility, lay our hands on our hearts, and cast a scrutinizing glance into our own consciences ; in this book, we shall read the infallible answer to this weighty question ; we shall find in it whether we travel in a way illumined by a star of Christian hope. The Lord, who holds seven stars in his right hand, speaks to us as He did to St. John in the Apocalypse : "I know thy works, and thy faith, and thy charity, and thy patience, and thy last works which are more than the former."* We cannot, therefore, deceive Him : nor does faith deceive us when it points out to our view the seven stars of Christian Hope. One of these stars, perhaps unheeded, most undoubtedly lights the way ; happy indeed would it be for us, could

* Apoc. ii., 19.

our hearts bear testimony that we have followed its light with unwavering fidelity! Oh! happier still, could we have the assurance that the Seven Stars of Christian Hope shone on the way of our earthly life! Well were it for us, could we say that we have corresponded to the seven-fold call of grace, and that we have followed with fidelity the Seven Stars of Christian Hope!

Let us now examine what these seven stars are. He who holds the seven stars in his hand says to us: "Be thou faithful unto death: and I will give thee the crown of life."*

I.—THE STAR OF FAITH.

"Faith is the root of every virtue; only what has been erected on this foundation can hope for the recompense promised to labor, the reward promised to virtue. Faith is the main stem of the vine; the various virtues are the branches; good works are the grapes."† "Faith is the root of every good action; the eye wherewith we direct our intention to God; the helm whereby we steer the little skiff of our good will towards the haven of love."‡ "Faith gives light to and chastens the soul, illumines the blind, distinguishes the Elect, protects the just, triumphs in all, and

* Apoc. ii., 10. † St. Ambrose. ‡ St. Augustine.

crowns with eternal beatitude, those who have remained true to the end."* "Faith is a safe anchor. When the little boat—our soul—is in danger of being engulfed by the stormy waves of temptation, Faith as a sure anchor, secures it against the violence of the tempest, saves it from shipwreck, and finally leads it into the harbor."† The first thing Jesus requires of us, is to believe. Faith before every thing. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be condemned."‡ Jesus says: "Amen, amen, I say unto you: He that believeth in Me, hath everlasting life."§ Every page of the Gospel shows that Faith is an assurance, a pledge of beatitude. How often has not the Lord exclaimed: "Thy Faith hath made thee whole."‖ "As thou hast believed, so be it done to thee."¶ "Great is thy Faith."** Whoever, therefore, possesses the true holy Catholic faith, and remains loyal to it till death, has a pledge and an assurance of eternal life; and if our works do not belie what we profess with our lips; that is to say, if our lives do not contradict the confession of our faith, this star of Christian Hope infallibly leads us into the harbor of salvation. "You shall greatly rejoice, if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful in divers temptations:

* St. Bernard. † St. Chrysostom. ‡ St. Mark xvi., 16.
§ St. John vi., 47. ‖ St. Mark v., 34. ¶ St. Matt. viii., 13.
** St. Matt. xv., 28.

that the trial of your faith (much more precious than gold which is tried by the fire), may be found unto praise, and glory, and honor, at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, you love: in whom also now, though you see Him not, you believe: and believing, shall rejoice with joy unspeakable, and glorified, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."* Faith is, as it were, a letter of credit on the part of God, which we hold in our hands. At the Divine judgment-seat, we can say: "Lord! I have ever-believed all that Thou hast revealed, all that the holy Catholic Church proposed to my belief: In return Thou hast promised me eternal life. Lord! I hold here, in my hand, my letter of credit—Thou hast to pay it. Thou art bound thereto by Thy Divine word. Permit me, then, to enter eternal life; give me the crown Thou hast promised to constancy in the Faith." Faith passes away—and is changed into the vision of the truths believed on the word of God; the vision of God, of the Supreme Good, therefore, will be the crown of Faith. This truth enables us to understand why all the Saints, and why all enlightened Christians, considered the deposit of the Faith as their most cherished good, as their supreme treasure; why, in death they clung to this anchor of hope, and relied on this letter of credit. A pious and learned

*I. Peter i., 6-9.

man, the celebrated Feller, in his last illness received, as all Christians hope to be able to receive, the official visit of a Priest whom his ever-solicitous Mother, the Church, our Guide to Heaven, had sent to prepare him for his final struggle, and to strengthen him with her last solemn rites. When, in reciting the prayers for the agonizing, the Priest pronounced the words: "He has not denied the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, but he has believed"—the dying man exclaimed in broken accents, but with unbounded confidence: "Yes, truly, I have believed, I have believed: Credidi." St. Teresa, too, at her dying moment, found her sweetest consolation, her firmest hope, in giving utterance to the words: "I die a daughter of the Holy Roman Catholic Church," which she loved so dearly that she was ready—as she writes herself—to give her blood and life in defence of the most trivial ceremony of this beloved Bride of Jesus. Being at the point of death, St. John Gualbert requested that there should be laid in the coffin with him, a document containing the following words: "I, John, believe and profess that faith which the Apostles preached, and which the Holy Fathers in four Councils established." What a consolation, what a joy for me then, to be guided by the hope-inspiring Star of Faith! The Star of Faith exhibits to my raptured sight crowns of glory, garlands of immortal bliss; for, although a sinner, a great

sinner, an unprofitable servant, I have through Thy mercy, oh God! preserved the Faith in all its purity; I have ever loved it from my youth, and even now, pronounce with joy the words with which the holy Council of Trent concludes the profession of Faith: "This Holy Roman Catholic Faith which I freely and openly profess, and out of which there is no salvation, I will continue to profess and will preserve to my very latest breath of life—so help me God and His holy Gospels."

II.—THE STAR OF VIRTUE.

Did he not know by his own experience and from the testimony of his ancestors, that the seed committed to the earth will, after having itself died, yield a harvest sixty-fold or a hundred-fold, the farmer would never resolve to scatter with a liberal hand the pretty golden wheat over the cold, unfeeling soil. Thus it is in spiritual matters. Did not Faith assure us, that our good actions are to receive a reward, in the next life; an eternal reward, a reward which is nothing less than the possession and enjoyment of God Himself, the supreme, endless Good, the eternal love; we could never be prevailed upon to perform works of virtue requiring sacri-

fice and self-renunciation. Faith, therefore, is the root ; hope is the blossom ; love is the fruit. After we have examined and understood the entire Gospel, there still "remain faith, hope and charity, these three." Our Faith passes away, when we see what we have believed ; our hope passes away, when we possess what we had hoped for ; charity alone remains.

We know now with the certainty of Faith, that every good work performed with a pure intention by the believing Christian, whilst in a state of grace, shall be rewarded in Heaven. The enjoyment of God's beatitude shall be the recompense.

We possess, moreover, not only the infallible promise of God, but, as St. Paul remarks, the Lord has confirmed this promise with an oath. "Wherein God, meaning more abundantly to show to the heirs of the promise, the immutability of His counsel, interposed an oath : that by two immutable things" (His promise and His oath) "in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hopes set before us. Which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm," (as heirs of God and co-heirs of Jesus Christ) "and which entereth in even within the veil : where the fore-runner, Jesus, is entered for us, made a high Priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech."*

* Heb. vi., 17-20.

Every meritorious action, even the very least, shall receive an eternal recompense; and since by the word virtue we do not mean simply, the habit of performing some such actions, but all the meritorious actions performed during life, it is evident that the *Star of Virtue* is nothing else than the hope to attain to the possession and enjoyment of God's happiness, as a reward for our good works.

Were I to say to a poor simple peasant: "In a short time you will be as wise and as learned as Solomon and Plato were"—or to a poor servant girl: "In a short time you will become the wedded wife of some powerful monarch;" should I say to a poor man suffering in his afflicted body, every ill to which human nature is subject: "In a little while your pains, your aches, shall trouble you no more; your present sufferings shall give place to a sea of delights for your now afflicted body;" they would scout at me, ridicule me, call me a dreamer—why? because the promise is too great. Now Faith promises us poor, miserable creatures, infinitely more; for the practice of virtue, it promises us the enjoyment of the wisdom, of the power, of the beatitude of God Himself. Our hearts, indeed, are unable to comprehend the greatness of this superabundant promise; but St. John says: God is greater than our hearts. What surpasses our hope, does not exceed the liberality of the

endless love of God. Rejoice, therefore, oh ye Christians! who in your every-day life practise virtue. Be glad and exult for joy! The *Star of Virtue* points out to you, and leads you to the heavenly crown of Hope, to the possession of God! "Yes, Virtue leads to honor; it is the parent of glory. Beauty and every thing earthly are the merest vanity. Virtue alone merits glory, and indeed, by right of justice; and it will infallibly obtain it; for the ultimate object of Virtue is nothing else than to make us like unto God, and render us participators in the greatness of His happiness."*

How consoling, how animating for us this truth is! How forcibly it urges us to lead in God's sight, pure, unsinful lives; to direct our hearts and intention to God and His good pleasure; to clothe ourselves with the garment of Christ, that is to say, to copy in all our actions, the example he has set us; to avoid what He avoided, to practise what He practised, to love what He loved!

What an unspeakable consolation would be the consciousness, that since our return to God we have never, by a deliberate sinful act, separated ourselves from Him; that we have performed all our daily actions from a good, supernatural motive; that we have been untiring in the practice of virtue. There rises up in the distance upon

* St. Bernard.

our vision, the heavenly crown of hope, which in accordance with His promise the Lord cannot refuse us! The greater the number of our acts of virtue, the more glorious will be the crown we expect. If a man, who had lived fifty years in the abyss of sin, had in his last sickness the uncommon grace sincerely and contritely to return to God; the absolution he received in his dying moment would be the only assurance, the only pledge of his crown of Heaven, of his sharing in the eternal pleasures of God. Now, suppose another man who, during fifty years, has lived in the practice of every virtue, has been in the habit of receiving once a month the Holy Sacrament of Penance; what a much greater, what a much more glorious crown the latter would have than the former! If a man receives Holy Communion once a year, and dies in the grace of God, he is sure of the crown of Heaven. How much richer, how much more glorious a crown could another reasonably hope for, who every week of his life, drew treasures from this fountain of grace! Whoever, whilst in a state of grace, offers up a prayer, gives an alms, makes a sacrifice, or exercises his charity, beholds a heavenly crown shine before him. But now, if one were to repeat these acts of virtue ten or a hundred times, is it not evident, that he could claim ten, or a hundred more crowns than the other? or, to speak more

properly ; does it not stand to reason, that the crown of the latter should be ten, or a hundred times more glorious than that of him who can claim the reward of only one act of virtue? "Every one shall receive his own reward according to his own labor."* "He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly ; and he who soweth in blessings, shall also reap of blessings."†

What a powerful inducement for us to apply ourselves to the practice of virtue with all possible zeal, and to gather up for ourselves treasures in Heaven! How bitter would the recollection be, that by our own neglect, we had lost so many thousand degrees of heavenly glory! How great, on the contrary, would our consolation be, could we have the consciousness that we have spent many long years in the grace of God, in the practice of virtue, and that we have secured for ourselves innumerable degrees of eternal happiness!

The hope-inspiring *Star of Virtue* is, therefore, the unpretending, but most certain expectation of the rewards merited by our good works. The Heavenly Crown of our Hope, is the possession and enjoyment of the Supreme, Infinite Good.

*I. Cor iii., 8. †II. Cor. ix., 6.

III.—THE STAR OF MARTYRDOM.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment."* Every Christian, therefore, must be ready, rather to sacrifice everything, even life itself, than by a mortal sin, willingly to separate himself from God, his Supreme Good. If there is question of choosing between death or renouncing one's faith, the Christian who prefers to sacrifice his life, rather than prove untrue to his God, does only what he is in duty bound to do. Yet, as we have seen above, God, in his infinite bounty rewards such an act of love, not only with the crown common to all the Elect, with the beatific vision; but He, moreover, bestows on them, special, peculiar distinctions, to which we give the title of the "honorable crown of Martyrdom." During the first three centuries of the Christian era, when the followers of Christ were unremittingly persecuted with fire and sword, millions of Christians of every age, of every condition, and of every race merited this extra little crown of honor. In our days, this bloody sacrifice is rare. At present, the enemies of Christ confine themselves to what is certainly far worse than the destruction of temporal life.

*St. Matt. xxii., 37-38.

Whilst allowing soul and body to remain united, they employ prodigious efforts, make incredible sacrifices for the destruction of the life of the soul. But, whoever may have the happiness of laying down his life for Christ, in defence of the Religion of Jesus, which even, in this century, has happened more than once, shall behold the star of hope as a harbinger of Heaven's Crown, brilliantly shine before him.

But is it absolutely impossible without this cruel, bloody persecution of Christians, to merit the little crown of Martyrdom? Are not the intrepid heroes who, in defence of Fatherland, shed their noble heart's blood, sacrificed their precious lives, worthy of the title of Martyrs? Do we not deservedly call long, painful and bitter years of suffering a martyrdom? Is not he too, who died a noble victim of his charity, a martyr? This is the answer St. Thomas gives: "Only death for the sake of Jesus Christ, in defence of some article of Faith, or of some virtue relating to Jesus Christ, as Virginity dedicated to God, merits and receives the coronet of Martyrdom. The heroes who, whilst in a state of grace, defending the just rights of their country, fall before the enemies' swords, shall most undoubtedly receive in Heaven a reward corresponding to the sacrifice they will have made of their lives. *Martyrs*, however, we cannot call them, unless war is declared for the purpose of destroying the

Faith of Christ, and the soldiers die in defending this Faith." "Not the suffering, but the object for which one dies, makes the martyr."*

A long life of sufferings, for example in a Religious Order in a state of unhappy marriage, in persecution and affliction, is called a martyrdom; for it is frequently more bitter than death itself. And if this cross is borne with Christian resignation, it will have its own reward; but it cannot expect to receive the Martyr's crown, which is held out to physical death suffered in defence of the Faith or of some Christian virtue. Whoever sacrifices his life in serving the sick or the poor; in the performance of filial duty; or in complying with the obligations of his state of life, is called a martyr, and receives undoubtedly a glorious, superabundant reward; still he is not a martyr of blood. The nearest approach to the halo merited by martyrs is the desire, the quenchless longing, the sincere will, the earnest wish of martyrdom. Although indeed, the will without the deed can never attain to the real possession of this glorious distinction, yet, if inflamed by a very great love for God, it can, as St. Thomas maintains, merit an exceedingly great reward, even in a certain sense, that of martyrdom. For the Lord who is a just Judge, accepting the will for the deed, can permit those, whose hearts were ever filled with an earnest longing to shed

* St. Gregory.

their blood in proof of their love for Him, to partake, in some manner, of the glory and beatitude indicated by the crowns adorning the beaming, majestic brows of the witnesses of truth and virtue.

IV.—THE STAR OF VIRGINITY.

A new, a glorious crown which is prepared in Heaven for those who on earth have deserved it, is the halo belonging to Virginity, the little crown of Virgins of which we have already spoken. Simply to remain unmarried, or never to have sinned against this beautiful virtue, will not entitle one to the privilege of possessing this *Aureola*. It will no doubt be a source of great joy, of extra happiness in Heaven for one to have ever preserved his soul and body pure temples of the Holy Ghost. He shall find in the vision of God, if he shall have fought and conquered, a very rich reward. The special distinction, however, belonging to the state of Virginity; the peculiar happiness attached to it, is reserved for only those who freely, out of love to God, out of love to Jesus, will have remained pure and unmarried, until they depart this life in the peace of the Lord.

Happy, therefore, ye Virgins consecrated to

God ! Ye bridal souls of the Lamb ! be glad and exult for very joy. If you persevere to the end, you can claim, not only the crown of Heaven, the vision and possession of God, which constitute the happiness of all the Saints ; but you shall also enjoy the consolation of having your path through the mazes of this life, lighted up by the *Star of Virginity*, which gives the hope, nay the certainty, of bearing for all eternity a special mark of honor. This star will afford you the well-founded expectation of being seated on thrones next to that of Jesus, the Lamb ; of singing in the heavenly Jerusalem, a hymn, a new, a wonderful hymn which no one, not even one, amongst the multitude of the Saints and Elect can sing. Virgins alone can understand, appreciate, or take part in this astonishing choir of celestial music.

Oh happy vocation ! oh blessed hour in which thou didst choose me, oh my God, for this state of preference ! O happy, blessed moment, in which I vowed fidelity to Jesus, in which I followed the beautiful, the shining Star of Virginity !

But how would it be, should I come to the knowledge of this great truth when it is too late, when it is beyond my power to practice it ? What, if till now, I had never heard, not even suspected, that such very great honor awaited this virtue in Heaven ? Am I to lose all these privileges, because, without reflecting on the sacrifices I was making, I entered the marriage-

state of life? Am I to be excluded from all these honors, because in my foolish youth, I did not observe the conditions of virginity; because I took no means to preserve my purity? How shall it be, if I have desecrated the temple whose dignity I only now begin to understand? Is there any means by which, if we have lost it, the golden crown of Virginity can be recovered?

To this we answer: Never, can virginity once lost, be recovered. You can acquire sanctity and perfection in the married state; you can obtain forgiveness, forgetfulness of your old debts; you can recover the love of God you may have lost; you can even, in the course time, acquire greater sanctity than perhaps in a state of virginal innocence, you would have ever reached; but you can never undo what you have done—you can never so bring things about that what you have done, shall be undone. An act performed, will be an act performed for ever. Scalding tears—tears of blood even, cannot restore to you what you have lost. "Thy treasure is Virginity," writes St. Jerome—"once lost—it is irrecoverable."

But now, if from this moment, I should lead an innocent, virginal life; if I dedicate to the Lord, for the rest of my life, my soul and body; if I promise, henceforth, never to enter the state of Marriage; if I vow for the future, eternal purity and virginity, and remain true to my vows, can I not re-establish my right to the

honor belonging to virgins? If in the many combats in which I shall have to take part, for my spiritual defence; if in the great sacrifices I shall be called on to make, during the long years I may yet live, I remain faithful unto death, to my resolution of leading, henceforth, a life of purity, will it not be possible to recover my forfeited claim to this little crown? Can I not hope to approach quite near to Jesus in Heaven, to be numbered amongst the confidential bands of Virgin souls, who exclusively have been taught to sing the new hymn of Heaven? Is it not true, that there is nothing impossible to God?

Yes, truly no one can assign limits to God's power and love. Notwithstanding the truth which Faith teaches us about the honors in store for Virginity, God will not fail to reward most lavishly the day and years which—rather late it is true—we shall have spent in holy, virginal continency. The just Judge will not allow to go unrequited what in wish, in desire, in longing, in work we have done and offered out of love to Jesus. We can promise ourselves in some manner with certainty, a share in the joy and happiness of those who never sullied their souls or their bodies. How God will do this belongs to His own mysterious ways. Let us be content with the consciousness, with the hope, the conviction, that the greater our love for God is, the nearer it will lead us to the heart of Jesus. Although Magdalen does not wear in Heaven the crown of

virginal innocence, yet she most undoubtedly is not farther from the Heart of her Beloved Jesus than the Virgins themselves.

V.—THE STAR OF APOSTOLICAL ZEAL.

If "a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple" given to one of Christ's "little ones" must have "its reward;"* if the least work of mercy performed for a fellow-creature, merits an extra crown in Heaven, what an immense amount of glory is prepared for those who have been Teachers of Truth, Ambassadors of Eternity, Leaders of men to Heaven! "If it is a very laudable, meritorious work to rescue mortal man from a temporal death; how much more worthy of praise and merit is it, to save an immortal soul from eternal death!"† "There is nothing more agreeable to God, nothing which He has more at heart, than the salvation of souls; therefore, there can be no higher dignity than that of the Apostles."‡ Priests, Preachers and Doctors of the Church are called in the Holy Scriptures, "Men of God," "Co-laborers of God," "Servants of Jesus," "Ambassadors of Christ." The Apostolical vocation is, according to the doctrine of all the Fathers, far superior to all other dignities.

*St. Matt. x, 42. † St. Gregory. ‡ St. Chrysostom.

Is it, then, to be wondered at, that God should adorn in a special manner those whom he has selected to fulfill, here on earth, the office of Teachers, and who have been faithful to their obligations? This decoration is the *Aureola* of Doctors—the Heavenly chaplet of honor which we call the *apostolical crown.*

Although the sacerdotal dignity is a high eminence surrounded by deep abysses, yet it is an encouraging and joyful thought, that one has been selected from amongst millions, to announce the Gospel, to preach the doctrine of God's kingdom, and to direct and lead the children of men in their pilgrimage to eternal life. If, therefore, a man has consecrated his life and strength, exclusively to the service of Jesus and of His Church; if he has observed the law of God and taught others to do the same; if, with the torch of Faith and truth, he has delivered the noble souls of men from the darkness of death; if, in the true sense of the word, he has been a good shepherd, and, as Isaias says: "The Teacher of little ones,"* the Father of the poor, the refuge of widows, the support of the orphans, the eyes of the blind, the staff of the weak, the guide of those who have erred, the consolation of the afflicted, the example of all—can he not hope to see at the hour of his death, the effulgent Star of Apostolical Zeal rise up before him? With what

*Is. xxxiii., 18.

confidence can he not hope that God will be merciful unto him as he, during his apostolical life, ever showed mercy to others! Nay, more; he can confidently expect that, as a reward for his fidelity, for his long continued combat, and for his victory, he shall receive from the hands of God, not only the immortal crown of justice, but also the Apostolical coronet, as a memorial and distinction of the office of Apostolical Instructor, which he fulfilled.

What an incentive this is for the Priests of the Lord, for the Doctors of the Church, to inflame their hearts with zeal for the truth of Faith, for the embassy of salvation! What an inducement to despise every thing earthly, and, according to one's vocation, to devote oneself exclusively to the service of the king of eternity! What a powerful motive to instruct the ignorant with untiring care, to counsel the doubting, to console the afflicted, to convert sinners, to pray for all!

The more zealously we urge on our dealings in the talents intrusted to us, the greater shall be our profit and reward. This, indeed, is true not only of beatitude in general, but also, as St. Thomas remarks, most especially of the three *Little Crowns* of honor—that is, of Martyrdom, of Virginity, and of the Apostolical office of teaching. The more painful the martyrdom, the purer the virginity, and the more zealous the

teaching, the greater, the more beautiful, the more glorious shall the crown be.

Who, therefore, does not envy the fortunate Priests, who, by their preaching, by instructing in the Faith, by writings calculated to spread the Gospel-tidings, have merited an eternal and so wonderful an honor in Heaven! It will distinguish them from all others who have not been so active in the duties of Apostolical Instructors.

But now, men who, in accordance with their vocation, devote themselves to temporal, political or military affairs; or who are occupied with mere worldly science, may complain that they have been excluded from all participation in this honor. Pious, self-sacrificing, devoted woman can also complain of being deprived of all possibility of sharing in such reward, for St. Paul writes: "Let women keep silence in the Churches;"* that is to say it does not become them to assume in the Church, the office of Teachers.

We cannot alas! deny the grounds of these complaints. The vocation to a high position, is a gift of God's mercy—for the Lord says: "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will? Is thy eye evil because I am good?"†

Nevertheless, you can console yourselves that you are, as we have already seen, entitled to the

*I. Cor. xiv., 34. †St. Matt. xx., 15.

community of goods in Heaven. The general love of the Blessed, makes you enjoy by participation the happiness and pleasures of the others, although you cannot claim them as personal. Moreover, what can prevent any of us from performing in every state, in any condition of life, be we men or women, works prompted by zeal for the salvation of souls? Is not the Christian conduct of parents, a school of virtue for their children? Is it not possible to find, in every occupation, an opportunity to profess and announce the principles of Faith? Cannot the mother find frequent occasions of instructing, in a very proper manner, her children and her household in the Faith and in religious practices? Must we not admit, that those virgins who dedicate themselves to the service of the sick, in order chiefly to care for their souls; or those who devote themselves to the instruction and education of youth, are blessed with an immediate share in the Apostolical office of Instructor? Though it is true that they cannot, properly speaking, obtain possession of the Apostolical crown, yet, what prevents God from rewarding their earnest will, their zeal, their quenchless longing, by allowing them to partake in some manner of the elevated dignity of which we are speaking?

VI.—THE STAR OF VICTORY.

By this metaphorical expression, we understand the hope of an extraordinary recompense in Heaven, for some extraordinary, heroical act. Since God is infinite, and since there is an infinite number of degrees in the knowledge we can acquire of Him, and in the possession of his beatitude; we can understand, that for unusual virtue, there should be an unusual recompense, which can never be acquired by those who enter eternal happiness by the common way of the commandments of God. The Star of Victory beams, therefore, on him who, at the term of his earthly career closed in God's grace, is conscious of having performed out of love for God, a great, a heroic deed. Confiding in God's mercy and promises, he can undoubtedly hope for the merited reward of the crown of victory.

There are in Heaven certain marks of honor, which, without any merit on our part, we can acquire, and which, on this account, are called rather *crowns* of *grace* than *crowns* of *victory*. Thus Faith teaches us that the souls of those who have received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders, are indelibly impressed with what is termed a *Character*, which distinguishes its possessor from all those who

have never received these graces, and which for all eternity, will be a special source of joy to the Baptized, Confirmed and Ordained. Most undoubtedly, these distinguishing characters will increase our happiness in Heaven, even though we owe to the pure Divine mercy and goodness, and not to any victorious combat, the honor of wearing the insignia of children, of soldiers, or of Priests of God. If God bestows on us, of His own liberality, without even the slightest congruous merit on our part, such eminent marks of favor, what will He not do for those who, though not obliged by any Divine command, but out of pure devotion to His glory and honor, perform the most heroic deeds? What will He not do for those who, unaided by any human consolation, issue triumphantly from a desperate and persistent struggle with the numerous and powerful enemies of God and of their souls? This reward is the *crown* of *victory*.

We find, in the Holy Scripture, an explanation of this doctrine. A young man one day asked our Divine Saviour: "Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?" Jesus answered: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." "The young man saith to Him: All these have I kept from my youth, what is yet wanting to me? Jesus saith to him: If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt

have treasure in Heaven: and come, follow Me."* The Evangelical counsels, therefore, are the special objects of Christian heroism.

That God rewards, in an extraordinary manner, in the life to come, such an act of heroism, we learn from the lips of Jesus Himself. For, St. Peter, hearing that a free renunciation of this world's goods, in order to follow Jesus in poverty, merits so great a recompense in Heaven, asked our Lord: "Behold, we have left all things, and have followed Thee: what, therefore shall we have? and Jesus said to them: Amen, I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of His Majesty, you also shall sit on the twelve seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting."†

Such an heroic victory of grace over nature, such extraordinary acts as the voluntary renunciation of earthly goods; the binding of oneself by vow to obey the will of another, in every thing consistent with the Law of God; the embracing of the religious state of life, can, according to Christ's promise, confirmed as it were by a sol-

*St. Matt. xix. †St. Matt. xix., 27-30.

emn oath, expect an unusual reward in Heaven, the *Crown of Victory*.

This truth of our Holy Faith enables us to understand why for nearly two thousand years, there have been ever found in the Catholic Church, men and women of every state, and race, who left all, and who in poverty, obedience and purity, followed the pure, the poor and the obedient Jesus.

VII.—THE STAR OF LOVE.

A historian has left us the following description of a noble act of generosity. Whilst Alphonso of Spain,* was, with incredible valor, defending himself in a small fortified town, besieged by the Moors, he had the heart-rending grief to see his only son taken prisoner, in a sudden attack made by the enemy, and carried off in triumph to the hostile camp. With this distinguished youth in their hands, they considered the city as taken. The child was brought near the ramparts, and shown to the besieged, to whom the Moors cried out: "Alphonso, choose between surrendering the city and seeing your son

* This Alphonsus was never King, but a Spanish captain, perhaps the greatest of his time.—*Alphonso de Guzman, or Guzman el bueno.*

slaughtered before your eyes." What a terrible situation for the heart of a King, and a father! What a painful choice! Either to deliver up, for intolerable slavery, his people to a cruel tyrant, or to behold his dear, his only son sacrificed before his eyes!! After a desperate struggle in his heart, the King ascends the ramparts, deliberately draws his sword from its scabbard, and hurls it into the crowd of barbarians, saying: "With this, sacrifice my son to your hatred. Let him die, that my people may live and be free. Nature must submit, fidelity must triumph."

Now, if, according to our way of thinking, it is permitted to apply this fact to God the Father, we may see how Divine justice straitened the people of God, the beloved human race, for four thousand years, as it were with a most rigorous siege and constant threatening of eternal death. At length, God's Son, who had descended from Heaven upon earth, became the prisoner of Divine justice. Then there resounded in Heaven, the cry: "Eternal Father, either deliver up the human race to their merited punishment, or Thy Son must die!" And lo! O incomprehensible wonder of love! God says: "My Son shall die, man shall live. Take My innocent, My only begotten, My much-beloved Son, make a mockery of Him, scourge Him, crucify Him, slay Him; but the human race shall be redeemed, man shall

live, he shall not be suffered to be lost." "God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son,"* "He delivered Him up for us all."†

What love for us! Is not this a brilliant star of Christian hope? But the Son of God, our dear Saviour, who was holy and innocent, freely consented to this decision of His heavenly Father. "Therefore doth the Father love Me; because I lay down My life," He says Himself. "No man taketh it away from Me: but I lay it down of Myself, and I have power to lay it down."‡ Two hundred years before He appeared in the flesh, Isaias said of Him: "He was offered because it was His own will."‖ Yes, so much has the Son of God loved mankind! or, as St. Paul so admirably expresses it: "He loved Me and and delivered Himself for me."§ Out of love for me, He resolved, in order to satisfy for me the justice of God, to undergo Himself the punishments that were due to my sins, to offer Himself as the guarantee for me and all men, and to efface our debt with His heart's blood.

What love! Is not this a star of Christian hope?

The complete brilliancy of this hope-inspiring star will be visible only, when we reflect more earnestly on the love of Jesus for us.

Of all the mysteries of our holy Religion, there

* John iii., 16. † Rom. viii., 32. ‡ St. John x., 17-18.
‖ Is. liii., 7. § Gal. ii., 20.

is none that infuses a greater confidence into our hearts, that communicates more light to our minds, none that gives us a greater assurance of our salvation, than the sufferings and love of Jesus Christ. "His noble heart"—thus one of the most generous souls of our century, describes the love of Jesus*—"His noble heart could not be satisfied with simply manifesting to his disciples the great desire He had of eating the Paschal Lamb with them—since His death, the great proof of His love for mankind, would immediately follow this repast—but He also, in reality, offered Himself as a sacrifice of reconciliation. When the moment of his Passion arrived, He repeated that prayer He had so often addressed to His heavenly Father: Holy Father! Men's gifts and sacrifices cannot soften Thy anger; but behold—here I am! look at Me, Thy Son—wreak Thy vengeance on Me—punish Me, strike Me as Thou shouldst punish sinners; I am ready to suffer all, to endure all Thou wilt be pleased to inflict on Me; but spare, oh, spare sinners; spare mankind who are so dear to My heart." And God the Father accepted the sacrifice; "the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all."† "He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins."‡ Yet this offering of the will—this sincere readiness to suffer, did not satisfy the inflamed love of Jesus

* Bishop Colmar. † Is. liii., 6. ‡ Is. liii, 5.

for men; He wished to be in reality a man of sorrows. He gave His liberty, His honor, His blood for us. For us He died on the cross between two thieves. Even this, His great love deemed too little. Immediately before His death, making as it were His last will, He disposed in favor of men all He could call His own; He left us as a legacy, Mary, His Mother. This was not enough. He wished that after His death, His heart should be pierced, that it might remain open to us as a refuge of grace, as a sanctuary of love. And even this was not yet enough. He wished what no human mind had ever imagined, what no human heart had ever conceived—He wished that the painful and bloody sacrifice He had offered on the cross, should be perpetuated and daily renewed on the Altars of His Church, till the end of time, though in a mysterious and unbloody manner. Even this did not satisfy Him. He wished by a mystery of love to remain with us even after His death, in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar; to be with us truly, living, substantially; to dwell with men, at the same time in every church, in every country, in every place, where there is a Priest to offer this Holy Sacrifice. Nor was this yet enough for the excessive love of Jesus for man.

He wished to construct for Himself in each one of us, a Tabernacle, in which He might corporally dwell; into which He might enter as

often as—every day if—we wished. Even this did not suffice.

He wished that His flesh and blood should be for us a most certain pledge of eternal beatitude. Jesus says of Himself: "I am the bread of life, he that cometh to Me shall not hunger; and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst."* "Amen, amen, I say unto you: He that believeth in Me hath everlasting life—I am the bread of life."† "This is the bread which cometh down from Heaven; that if any man eat of it he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give, is My flesh for the life of the world."‡ "Amen, amen I say unto you: except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day."‖ He was still unsatisfied. He wished to preserve after His resurrection, on the Throne of His Majesty in Heaven, the marks of His wounds, as a memorial of His passion, that He might be our Mediator, and our Intercessor with the Father, and stay the angry hand raised to strike us. Even all this did not satisfy His incomprehensible love for us. In addition to all this, He sent us from Heaven the third person of the Blessed Trinity,

*St. John vi., 35. † 47-48. ‡ 50-52. ‖ 54-55.

the Holy Ghost who proceeds from the Father and the Son, to teach us all truth ; to give infallibility to our Leader, the Church ; to sanctify us with His grace, with His seven-fold gifts ; to draw us by His holy inspirations, as by bonds of love to God's own heart, and at every and any sacrifice to make us happy and blessed hereafter.

Oh, wonderful mercy of God ! Such is the Love-Star of Christian Hope ! Oh ! we must have hearts of ice and of stone, if we are not inflamed with a reciprocal love towards this Divine Saviour ; if we place not the most unbounded confidence in His mercy, in His bounty and in His fidelity in fulfilling His promises ! The measure of our love for this our Saviour will determine the majesty, and the glory of the crown we shall enjoy in Heaven.

Exemplary Love for Jesus.

The application of the truths that refer to the kingdom of Heaven, is so simple, and, for every reflecting Christian, so intelligible, that it would be superfluous here, in concluding, to adduce another explanation of the manner in which a true Christian, who earnestly strives to secure eternal beatitude, should form his intentions, or exemplify them in his works. We have only

one more remark to make, namely; that love contains all perfection; and hence, every thing depends on this: That, in our earthly life, we endeavor to reach a degree of perfect love of God. St. Jerome says: "There are certain good works, from the performance of which, we all can find good reasons to be excused; but no one can find an excuse not to love Almighty God. Thou canst say: I cannot fast; but canst thou say? I cannot love. Thou canst say: I cannot lead a single life, I cannot distribute my goods among the poor; but canst thou say? I cannot love. Thou canst not perform miracles, thou canst not raise the dead to life; but darest thou say? I cannot love."

The knowledge of Jesus Christ, and meditation on His life, especially inflame this love for God. He who has often vividly represented to himself, the life, the works, the passion and the death of our Lord, cannot possibly, as we have already endeavored to show, remain cold and unfeeling towards Him. He will as surely be inflamed by the warmth of His Divine love, as cold water placed over a blazing fire, will, in a short time, be in a state of ebullition. Since it is an old truth, that words move, but that example forces every thing with it, we shall close this little book with a few sentences and traits from the Lives of those Saints, who were, in a special manner, remarkable for the very tender love they bore to

the Saviour. Even though we be not in a state to aspire so high, yet we may hope to inflame our desire of exerting ourselves to attain, according to the measure of Divine grace, a somewhat similar love for Jesus.

We shall direct our attention to seven Saints, whose lives are well-known to all, and who, by the greatness of their love, shine amongst the other Saints, as stars of greater magnitude.

I.—ST. IGNATIUS MARTYR.

We read, in the various letters of this Saint, the following passages, which bear a remarkable testimony to the great love with which his heart was inflamed. "They are taking me to Rome; and the soldiers who have charge of me, treat me with as much inhumanity as if they were savage beasts. But, I bear all my sufferings willingly; I esteem all as nothing, if I only be admitted to the vision of Jesus Christ, my Saviour, my God, who died for me. I desire indeed to suffer, but I know not whether I am worthy. On account of my love for Jesus, I am bound with chains; still I am unworthy of him; but if allowed to pour out my very heart's blood, and die a cruel death for my Lord, perhaps I shall have the happiness of being deemed worthy to see Him. To love Jesus Christ

should be our only joy in this life. When His spirit has penetrated our hearts, we shall find true life. Outside of this element, I should not wish even to breathe. He is my hope, my honor, my inexhaustible treasure. In Him, and for Him, I have borne, from Syria to Rome, these chains which I regard as most precious jewels. I write to the churches and signify to them all, that I am willing to die for God unless you hinder me. I beseech you not to show unseasonable good-will towards me. Suffer me to be the food of wild beasts, whereby I may attain unto God: I am the wheat of God, and I am to be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be the pure bread of Christ. Rather entice the beasts to be my sepulchre, that they may leave nothing of my body; that being dead, I may not be troublesome to any. I earnestly wish for the wild beasts, that are prepared for me. I heartily desire, that they may not, by your prayers, be compelled to lay aside their wonted cruelty, but rather may be permitted to rush upon me, and soon despatch me. I will incite them to devour me entirely and suddenly, and not serve me as they did some whom they were afraid to touch. If they are unwilling to meddle with me, I will compel them to tear me in pieces. Let fire, or the cross, or the concourse of wild beasts; let cutting or tearing of the flesh; let breaking of the bones and cutting off of the limbs; let the shattering in pieces of my whole

body, and all the evil torments of the devil come upon me, provided only I attain to Jesus Christ. I write to you, because I am filled with a quenchless longing to die for Him. Though I am alive writing this, yet my desire is to die. My love is crucified. The fire that is within me does not seek to be quenched; but being alive and springing within me, says: Come to the Father. Believe me that I love Jesus who delivered Himself up to death for me."

As soon as he arrived in Rome, St. Ignatius was hurried to the Prefect, to whom, the guards of the saintly prisoner, delivered the Emperor's letters. The case, of course, was soon decided—he was sentenced to be cast to the wild beasts, which were kept for the purpose of amusing the Romans, by devouring human beings. Behold the venerable sufferer, worn out by ill treatment, rough usage, fatigued from a long journey, exhausted by the weight of his chains—he calmly walks into the amphitheatre, into which open the dens of the savage beasts. The many tiers of galleries are thronged with male and female pagans, waiting for the cruel pleasure of seeing a fellow-creature torn and devoured by those animals, infuriated by being purposely kept without food, for some time previous. His countenance is lit up with joy; unspeakable contentment is visible in every feature of his, in his every movement, because he has

been granted the very great happiness of laying down his life, in proof of his love for Jesus Christ. Casting a majestic, but benign glance at the thronged galleries, he exclaimed: "Romans, think not that I have been condemned to death on account of any crime; no—I am here on account of my faith—I am here, because I desire to come to the possession and enjoyment of my God for whom I long with an unutterable craving." Hearing the lions roar and prepare to rush out of their dens upon him, with a strong voice and a superhuman courage he cried out: "I am the wheat of the Lord, I must be ground by the teeth of these beasts to be made the pure bread of Christ." The lions rushed upon him and tore him into pieces, while he pronounced the Holy Name of Jesus, whose love filled his heart on which was found in distinct characters the word "Jesus."

II.—ST. GERTRUDE.

Whoever would know the living fire of love with which the heart of St. Gertrude was inflamed, must read her book on Divine Inspiration—it is itself capable of enkindling that sacred fire in the heart of the reader.

We read in the life of St. Gertrude, that she

loved the Lord so tenderly and so sincerely, that her heart was completely penetrated with the fire of this love. Her every desire was to please Him ; her every effort to be like unto Him; her every wish to unite herself thoroughly with His holy will. Jesus was the Pastor and Leader who governed every movement of her soul; never did she fail in obedience to Him. His love was the light which, in the exercise of virtue, ever enabled her to do what was purest and most perfect. The Passion of the Son of God was the usual object of her prayer and meditation. She had such elevated thoughts on this subject, and, after the example of St. Paul, she was so entirely impressed with a feeling of sympathy, that whilst reflecting on the mysteries of the Redemption, she experienced, in a certain manner, the same sufferings and pains, that Jesus, our Divine Saviour, felt and bore for us. By her love, she saw and felt the scourging which Jesus received ; she had her brow wounded by the crown of thorns, her hands pierced by the nails ; she tasted the gall and the vinegar ; in short, by her love, she shared in all the sorrows of Jesus.

Her devotion to the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar was most astonishing ; it surpassed all her other practices of piety. Day and night, her thoughts and longings were so directed to this object of her love, that her whole life could be

called a constant communion. Long before she received this Sacrament for the first time, she offered all her actions as a preparation for it, that her heart might be purified, and that she might be more and more worthy to receive so great a visit as that of our Lord Himself. For a long time after each reception of this Sacrament of love, she was accustomed to direct all her actions as a thanksgiving for such a happiness, for so great a grace. Of nothing did she think more frequently than of this celestial repast, in which, with a lively Faith, she saw and received her Jesus; on no subject did she speak more freely than of this great mystery of Divine Love. There was no practice to which she exhorted her spiritual daughters more zealously, than, by careful preparation, to excite in themselves an ardent longing for the happy moment of our Lord's visit. It was indeed especially by means of the graces which she received in the adorable mystery of Holy Communion, that she attained such a high degree of perfection. The promise of the Saviour that those, who eat His flesh, and drink His blood, shall live by Him, as He liveth by the Father, was accomplished in her. For by her fervent, frequent and holy reception of our Lord's body and blood, she shared most intimately in the life of God, and Christ lived in her.

On one occasion, she was at a sermon preached by a Religious, who, amongst other things,

said that "the love of God is a golden arrow which gives man the right to claim as his own whatever he can hit and pierce with it." "How foolish then," continued the Preacher, "must be those who set their hearts on earthly objects, and think not of Heaven's goods!" At these words, St. Gertrude felt her heart inflamed, and cried out to Jesus: "O Thou! the only Spouse of my soul! Had I this arrow, I would pierce Thy heart with it, that I might possess it as my own, for ever and ever." No sooner had she pronounced these words, than rapt up in spirit, she was allowed to behold the Lord, who, holding in His hand a golden arrow, and aiming it at Gertrude, said to her: "Dost thou see the arrow thou desirest? since I have it, I will wound thee with it."

On another occasion, the Lord revealed to a pious soul, consecrated to God, that his sweetest and most acceptable abode on earth, was in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar; and next to that, he found his delight in dwelling in the heart of his Bride, Gertrude, and in that of her faithful companion Mecthilda.

Speaking of this Saint to another of His servants, our Lord said that the members of the body are not so intimately united with the heart, and their motion is not so controlled by the will of man or united to it, as the will of Gertrude is submissive to the will of God.

III.—ST. TERESA.

All that St. Teresa said or wrote of our Lord Jesus Christ; all that she did or suffered for Him, is an incontrovertible proof of her irresistible love for Him.

Asked by her confessor, from whom she concealed nothing, how she employed her time; and whether, outside the hour appointed for prayer, she occupied her heart and mind with God, St. Teresa answered that, in her inmost soul, she continually kept company with God; for she could not imagine that any one had more love for Him than she, because she could not live without Jesus.

Her love was so ardent that frequently, notwithstanding the resistance of her will, it caused her to lose all consciousness, and to be rapt in ecstasy. In a vision, she saw a small, but inexpressibly beautiful seraph with shining countenance, standing by her side, and holding in his hand a golden arrow whose point was blazing with fire. This arrow of love, the seraph, from time to time plunged into her heart, from which issued a stream of love for God. Once, while she was in the convent parlor, hearing some one sing a hymn which commenced with the words:

O, When shall my eyes behold Thee!
Jesus, meek and good!

she immediately fell into a swoon. For these words took such violent possession of her heart, that she lost the use of her senses, and she had to be brought to her cell and laid as a corpse on her couch.

She had an unutterable desire to see God glorified. She found her supreme joy in the thought of the infinite beatitude He possesses ; and when, during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, she heard the words of the creed ; "of whose kingdom there shall be no end," she felt springing up in her soul special piety, and interior consolation. Another proof of this her heroic love, we find in the vow she made : Ever, and in all things, to do what was most perfect, and most agreeable to God.

It would be impossible to describe her tender love for Jesus in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. To form a just idea of it, one must read her own writings.

When, on her death bed, the Holy Viaticum was brought to her, this love for Jesus gave her such physical strength that, even in spite of her great weakness and exhaustion, she rose from her bed, and, had she not been prevented, would have cast herself on the ground—her countenance was radiant with beauty and love. Folding her arms, with a heart overflowing with joy, she com-

menced in a sweet charming voice to sing a hymn of praise. When, with her lively faith she beheld Jesus in the consecrated Host, she gave utterance to these words so full of love that they penetrated to the inmost souls of the sisters who were present: "Oh, my God and my Spouse! has the hour for which I so earnestly sighed, at last arrived? We can now, see each other. It is time to leave this life. Well then, Thy will be done! The hour which I have so long desired has at length dawned upon me! There is, finally, an end to my exile; my soul can now rejoice with Thee!"

Such was the death of this noble, this holy virgin at the age of sixty-seven. After her death she revealed to a sister of her Order, that it was brought about, not so much by sickness, as by extraordinary love of God, which her exhausted nature was unable to bear.

IV.—ST. CATHERINE OF SIENNA.

In the life of this Saint, we find proofs of the unusual graces which the Lord bestowed upon her. On her part also, she endeavored to make

herself worthy of these favors by her sincere, unshaken love for Jesus, which was consuming her, and which was the occasion of her frequent, aye, even almost constant bodily ailing. She tells us herself that, when yet a child, she, as it were, constructed in her heart, a cell in which she could ever be engaged in loving Jesus. Day and night, her thoughts dwelt on Him; she sighed for Him; she spoke only of Him and for Him. To Him she consecrated her Virginity, in order that she might resemble Him. She continually exercised herself in works of penance and self-denial. Her bed consisted of two boards; and even on these, she slept but little. Sleep she termed her chief enemy; for it prevented her from keeping company with Him, who was the only object of her love.

The most Holy Sacrament of the Altar and the Passion of our Lord, were the sources whence she drew all these graces. Her confidence in the blood of Jesus, as our ransom, surpasses all imagination. She always placed at the head of her letters, and in fact of everything she wrote, the words: "The Blood of Jesus." Even in the very last moment of her life, she repeated these same words: "The Blood of Jesus—the Blood of Jesus!"

V.—ST. FRANCIS XAVIER.

This Saint, called the Apostle of India, was a worthy son of holy Father Ignatius, whose virtues he labored to acquire, and whose love for Jesus Christ he strove to imitate; and his efforts were crowned with complete success; for he became penetrated in an extraordinary and heroical manner with the love of God. His great virtues practised in the most difficult circumstances, his untiring zeal, his innumerable apostolical labors in Italy, Spain, Portugal, India and Japan, show incontestibly, how St. Francis succeeded in this school of virtue; how completely the spirit of the Love and Imitation of Jesus Christ had seized upon him.

In the midst of his many labors, his heart was ever intimately united with God. When his labors led him into the distracting company of men, he always and everywhere kept his heart united with Jesus Christ, whose familiar intercourse gave him strength and consolation, and whose name was ever on his lips; nay! even in his sleep, he was accustomed to exclaim: "My Jesus! my Saviour!"

VI.—ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISIUM.

St Bonaventure, who wrote the life of St. Francis, calls him his seraphic father; a friend of the bridegroom; one, who, like a coal in the furnace of Divine love, was enkindled and impregnated with love for God. Whenever any one spoke within his hearing of the love of Jesus, he felt his very soul moved and inflamed. "He who loved us so much," he used to say, "deserves that we should love Him in return." Jesus was the constant object of his thoughts; his heart and soul reposed in this love as on a firm basis; hence it is that he was so much given to prayer, to recollection, and to retirement.

When alone, he poured out his soul in loving sighs and copious tears. He found his greatest consolation in reciting the Psalms; for thus he had words to praise God, to extol His wonders, His greatness, His goodness. His heart was filled with devotion and joy, whenever he pronounced the Holy Name of Jesus. "The fire and flames of Jesus' love," says St. Bonaventure: "had acquired such strength in him, and had reached such a height, that all the waters of tribulation, of sufferings and of pain, that burst in upon him, could never extinguish its ardor." But the special indication of his love for Jesus,

was his uncontrollable longing to imitate our Lord, and to resemble Him in every particular, chiefly in poverty and sufferings. The reward, here on earth, for his love was, that he should bear on his body the marks of our Lord's wounds, those venerated, honored signs of the infinite love of our Divine Saviour.

VII.—ST. AUGUSTINE.

This great Doctor of the Church is represented to us by painters, as holding in his hand a burning heart pierced by an arrow. And, indeed, it was his love for Jesus that raised him, after so sinful a life, to so high a degree of perfection; it was this love that secured for him such distinction, even amongst the Blessed in Heaven; it was this love that proved the omnipotence of grace, and its wonderful victory over nature.

Methinks we cannot conclude this little book more befittingly than by quoting a few of the expressions of the inflamed love of this great Saint for Jesus Christ.

"I love Thee, O Lord! yes, I say with confidence, undoubtingly, I love Thee. By Thy word, Thou hast wounded my heart, and I have consecrated it to Thy love. Since Thou hast dispelled

the darkness that surrounded me, and hast given me a knowledge of Thyself, I have never forgotten Thee. Ever since I knew who Thou art, I have impressed Thy remembrance on my soul, and I find in it my present joy, my supreme contentment.

"I love Thee my God! and I earnestly desire to make more and more progress in this love. Grant me, I beseech Thee, this grace. Oh, Jesus! Thou most beautiful amongst the children of men; I long for Thee! Oh, that I could love Thee according to the measure of my longing, of my indebtedness! Like Thy perfections, our love for Thee should have no measure, and know no limits; for Thou hast loved us so intensely, Thou hast done so much good to us, Thou hast redeemed us at so great a price. O Love! which Thou, sweet Jesus, God of love, ever enkindlest and never extinguishest! inflame my heart with this fire Divine, with the glow of this longing for Thee!

"Oh, most sweet! oh, most kind! oh, most loving! oh, most amiable! oh, most beloved! oh, most desired! oh, most beautiful being! Thou art sweeter than honey, whiter than snow; more precious than gold and rich jewels! Thou art dearer to me than all the riches and honors of this world. With a loud cry, I cry unto Thee with my whole heart. Come; oh, come to my soul, adorn it, embellish it, that it may please

Thee; purify it from every stain, prepare it in order that Thou mayest possess it; for it is just that so pure, so holy a Lord as Thou art, should dwell in a Palace pure and spotless. Sanctify me, for I am a vessel set apart for Thee; remove all wickedness from me, fill me with Thy grace, and keep me in this state, that I may now and for ever be unto Thee, a most acceptable temple, a delightful dwelling. Amen." Such are the flames of a loving heart.

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Stoger, John

AUTHOR
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